

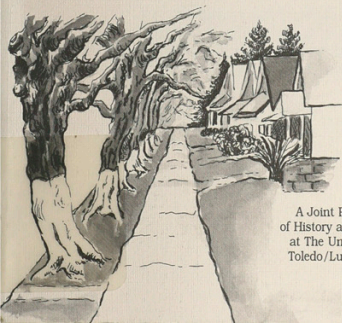
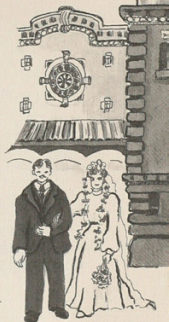


# Birmingham

## Reflections on Community

**Diane F. Britton & John F. Ahern**

Project Directors



A Joint Project of the Department  
of History and the Urban Affairs Center  
at The University of Toledo, and the  
Toledo/Lucas County Public Library



Toledo-Lucas County Public Library



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## Preface

*Birmingham: Reflections on Community*, volume two of *Birmingham Remembers*, is the result of the dedicated efforts of three primary groups. Their collaboration has made it possible to capture a time and place in Toledo which is both historically interesting and worthy of note.

The first and most important group, of course, comprised the residents of Birmingham themselves. Many of them had become senior citizens by the time they agreed in 1983 to formally recount their valuable memories, and many of these residents have died since 1983. We are indebted to them for the legacy they have left us.

The second group was composed of sixth graders in Birmingham School, eighth graders at St. Stephen's, Holy Rosary and East Side Junior High School, as well as students in Cardinal Stritch High School and Waite High School. Many thanks to Charlene Burke, Shawn Burke, Michael Driehorst, Roberta Fitch, Doug Garand, Mary Jo Hull, Carol Kristof, Sarah Lucas, Lynda Nowak, Emilio Ramirez, Joseph Sommers, Rene Szymanski and Kelly Wagner.

After brief instructions from Mary Sarabia and myself, these young people, armed with a few sample questions and a tape recorder, went into Birmingham—an area well known to some, less well known to others—and assumed the responsibility of documenting the neighborhood's rich heritage. Following that, Mary Lou Barber, a staff member in the College of Education, painstakingly transcribed the interviews, and then the manuscript was placed in the archives of the Local History Room of the Toledo-Lucas County Library.

The material remained dormant until Dr. Diane F. Britton, energetic history professor at The

University of Toledo, convinced me that such a rich resource should not be relegated to the archives, awaiting discovery by some future historian. She recommended that the interviews be studied and that appropriate selections be compiled for publication (excluding those which a few residents requested not be used). Dr. Britton and her history students thus became the third group involved and the one vested with the responsibility of bringing this project to fruition. We appreciate the efforts of Sara Ashton, Emily Carter, Andrew Davis, Janis Fakes, Leslie Heaphy, Cynthia Roberts and Lynn Thomas. These historians were able to grasp the essence of the community, thereby relaying to others the sense of cohesiveness and pride found in Birmingham, as well as other ethnic neighborhoods in America. Anne Burnham, information writer for the Department of History, edited the final version of the manuscript. Her many valuable suggestions have contributed to the quality of the volume.

Credit is also due the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library. Dave Noel, director of public relations, consistently provided encouragement and needed resources. Clyde Scoles, the director of the library, and his predecessor, Ardath Danford, provided six hundred dollars in support of the project and many competent librarians helped with research and documentation. The staff of the Birmingham branch library deserves a special thanks. Their support for the Birmingham Cultural Center and their encouragement of the study of Hungarian culture through special displays and acquisitions help to promote the preservation of ethnic heritage in the community.

It is apparent that the Birmingham of today is different in many ways from the description provided in the pages which follow. The joint efforts of many people have, by making this volume pos-

sible, preserved for posterity an important way of life. Perhaps one of the most heartwarming and encouraging discoveries made in the process of developing this story is that the younger generation—as well as the older generation—has shown so much interest in Birmingham's heritage. Thus while we cherish the past, we also have reason to look forward to the future.

John Ahern, Director  
Birmingham Cultural Center



## **Introduction**

The story of Toledo's Birmingham neighborhood is one that reflects the larger themes of American urban development—immigration, industrialization and community growth. That story is told here in the words of those who actually experienced it, the long-time residents of Birmingham who shared their memories through an oral history project. The value of these reminiscences is that they reveal the intangibles of the past. One gains a great deal of historical insight into the Birmingham community by paying close attention to the emphasis each narrator places upon certain subjects, events or traditions. These aspects of community life cannot be gleaned from traditional written records. While such documents offer objective data and evidence from the past, personal memories provide a sense of being there and of participation. This history of Birmingham is unique because it recaptures the mood and the spirit of the people and their times.

Birmingham was established at the end of the nineteenth century when the United States was undergoing a profound change due to industrialization, rapid urbanization and the influx of millions of immigrants. The book is organized around themes that reflect both change and continuity in Birmingham in relation to internal and external forces. Section I examines immigration and the process of acculturation, major themes which influenced the development of the Birmingham community. People from Hungary and other European countries came to America to escape depressed economies and to make a better life for their families and future generations. This first section illustrates the importance neighborhood residents gave to preserving their ethnic heritage. Most of those persons inter-

viewed could name the towns from which their grandparents or parents had emigrated. They understood the reasons for leaving and the poignancy of the journey to such a faraway land.

The effort to retain an ethnic identity coincided with a larger movement in the United States for new immigrants to become acculturated. This is aptly demonstrated in the educational experience of many Birmingham residents. As children learned to speak English and to recite the names of American presidents, they also often continued to speak their native language at home and participate in traditional European activities. Some residents recall family hardships which necessitated missing school. Other narrators remember the disciplinary process, which was often reinforced at home, demonstrating the consolidation of older European traditions with American culture.

Work, recreation and religion, the focus of Section II, contributed a sense of meaning to the lives of Birmingham residents. The workplace was the heart of the Birmingham community. In 1893, when the Malleable Castings Company moved to Toledo, one hundred Hungarian families followed the factory. These families—along with others who emigrated from Hungary, Czechoslovakia and Italy, as well as African-Americans from the South—quickly opened grocery stores, bakeries, dry goods shops, saloons and other businesses. Birmingham became a self-sufficient entity where residents could buy everything they needed within the community. Like so many immigrants at the turn of the century, the Birmingham residents had to learn to adjust to long, grueling hours in the factories, without any benefits or job security. Husbands, wives and children often pitched in to make ends meet.

Recreation became an important part of the community, with leisure activities and sports of



all kinds offering an important diversion during non-working hours for all members of the neighborhood. The variety of activities further enhanced the closeness of the community. Organized sports included gymnastics, boxing and baseball, often providing the occasion for neighborhood get-togethers. In addition to sports, religion occupied a prominent and continuing role in the lives of Birmingham families. Holy Rosary, St. Stephen's, St. Michael's Byzantine Catholic and Calvin United (formerly the Hungarian Reformed) shaped and in turn reflected their congregations. As gathering places, they continue to keep traditions and customs alive, creating a strong bond among church members.

Work, play and prayer served to bind the community as the people of Birmingham developed a shared sense of values, tradition and togetherness. These neighborhood attributes are clearly illustrated in the oral histories. The cohesiveness of the Birmingham residents has long been a hallmark of the district. Eager to continue old world traditions while assimilating into American society, the men, women and children of Birmingham developed a community which exhibits the best characteristics of both. The memories of Birmingham's residents illustrate the process of bonding and community building with the growth of shared traditions, mutual dependence and stability.

Section III explores the process of neighborhood development through rituals and holidays. Important family rituals—marriages, baptisms and funerals—were shared events that drew the community together. Holiday traditions continue to rely on a rich ethnic heritage, as Hungarian and Czechoslovakian immigrants pass old world customs on to younger generations. Christmas plays, Easter food blessings and Corpus Christi processions are activi-

ties that combine new friendships with old-world customs. These traditions remain an important part of the community and participation preserves the history of the neighborhood.

As Birmingham residents went about their daily lives, national and world events affected them and influenced their existence. Despite the cohesiveness and self-sufficiency of the neighborhood, these larger events shaped the destiny of the people. Section IV examines the effects of the Great Depression, World War II and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. The Great Depression of the 1930s hit industrial cities especially hard, with Toledo having one of the highest unemployment rates. Memories focus on coping during hard times. Following the depression, World War II saw a generation of young men serve on faraway battlefields to preserve American values. No neighborhood, including Birmingham, remained untouched by the war. During the 1950s community residents, many with relatives still in the old country, carefully followed the events of the Hungarian Revolution.

History has been important in the neighborhood for reasons other than preserving heritage. History has also empowered the community, as revealed in Section V. From the threatened widening of Consaul Street to the yearly Birmingham Festival, the community has drawn on its past in order to guide itself into the future. Many members of the younger generation have moved away from Birmingham, largely for economic reasons. Even so, they continue to feel a connection to the heritage of their youth, ethnicity and the good things that long-time residents remember about their neighborhood.

Diane F. Britton  
Department of History  
The University of Toledo





## SECTION I HERITAGE

### **Louis Kovacs**

There was a lot of nice kids over there in our neighborhood. . . . They were all children of immigrants, their mothers and fathers . . . most of them were immigrants.

### **Margaret Brezvai**

[My parents] came from different villages but they met in Toledo where they worked. My mother was born in Forro [Hungary] in 1898; my father was born in Busziti in 1896. They could get work here and they thought it would be a better country to be in with a lot more work.

. . . They wanted to make their home over here. There were a lot of Hungarian people coming to America because there were jobs, and they liked it so they all came.

My mother was three years old when she came out from Europe and my father was thirteen.

### **Mary Mahler**

[My parents] were born in Europe. Czechoslovakia at that time wasn't Czechoslovakia, it was Slovakia. The town was Velika Devina. They met over there and they had four children there and then they came—my dad came—to Lorain, Ohio. And then he brought my mother over from Europe and they lived in Lorain till three of us were born there, and I was three years old when I came to Toledo. That was in 1912, when they lived on Valentine Street.

### **Agnes Gadus McDaniel**

Mother and dad were both born in Czechoslovakia of Slovak descent. My dad was sixteen when he came to this country and lived temporarily in Cleveland with distant relatives. However, when he was nineteen he came to Toledo to look for work.

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

My father came from Hungary but my mother was born here. . . . A lot of people came that wanted work—help over here at the steel mills, the shipyards. They wanted some good strong labor—you know, cheap—and Father Eordogh, the monsignor from Saint Stephen's, was instrumental in bringing a lot of people here.

### **William Kertesz**

I am one of nine children of Stephen and Barbara Kertesz. My father was born on August 20, 1888 in Keresztes, in Abauj Megye, Hungary and immigrated to this country in 1905. He went to Seattle to live with his brother Andy; later he came to Toledo. My mother was born Barbara Varkoly on February 4, 1895 in Encs, Hungary, and came to America when she was ten years old. She came here with a Mrs. Szaniszló and her five children. She was taken to her Aunt Verna; everybody called her "Verna Neni" (Mrs. Verna).

My father's parents were Andrew Kertesz and Barbara Vizslai; not much is known about them. My mother's parents were Andrew Varkoly and Anna Juhasz, also of Encs. Anna lived to be ninety-four years old.

### **Frank Drlik**

My mother and dad came from Czechoslovakia, so they wanted us to preserve the language and we talked the Czech language at home. . . . They came from Mala Vrpka. That's a typical type of a Czech name they have; their consonants and their vowels—like my name Drlik—is a mixture, a funny mixture of consonants and vowels.

### **Joseph Szegedi**

My mother and father migrated here from Hungary when they were children. They got here about 1906. . . . They just migrated here because they wanted a better life in America. They were just peasant people, they didn't have much.

### **Wilma Thomas**

My husband's people were from Fodor and his mother was from Gyonzruszka in the province of Abauj Megye, now part of Czechoslovakia. . . . Although I am not Hungarian (I am of German descent), I feel that I'm a Hungarian "convert" and I've learned some of the language and some of the music. It has been a very happy experience to live here with the Hungarian people most of my life.

### **Joel Vargo**

My dad come from the old country when he was three years old. He come from the village of Borsodsnirak Boldns, just outside of Miskolen. He was the only child; I have no relatives.

### **Mary Lenkay**

I guess [my parents] were looking for a better world to see what kind of work they could find here 'cause in Europe they didn't have much work where they could make money. In the villages they grew their own vegetables and they had a cow and chickens, stuff like that, but you need money also.

### **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

I have lived in Birmingham all my life; I am sixty-three years old. My mother's maiden name was Ethel Bodak and her parents were Julia and Louis Bodak. Grandmother Julia and Grandfather Louie, with their two daughters, Ethel (my mother) and Yolanda (my Aunt Jennie), came from Rossford in 1910.

### **Frank Nagy**

My dad is Frank Nagy. He was born here in this country. His dad came to this country to work in the iron ore, the iron business.

My mother was born here but she was raised in Hungary. Her parents went back to Hungary; then my mother returned when she finished her schooling there. She was eighteen when she came back to this country. Though she was born here she

was educated in Hungary. Her name is Julia Vajda Nagy.

### **Victoria Oravec**

My mother, her mother put her in the convent at the age of nine and she was, you know, with the nuns, the sisters; she practically grew up in there. . . . She said she used to help the nuns cook, clean and do things like that. She wore the white veil, she was a novice, for I don't know how long—two, three years, I think they wear the white veil—and before she was supposed to take her vows down, she stepped out; she was twenty-one already and she stepped out. She came to America and she got married here.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

Yes, I remember my parents, my ma and dad. When my ma was eighteen years old she came—my daddy and ma came—from Hungary; and they lived in the same village but my momma [and] my daddy did not know each other in the village. So, when they came out to Toledo, Ohio, my daddy's uncle brought her out here. So, my ma and daddy got married in 1900.

### **Frank Drlik**

I never saw my grandma and grandpa. You know, when my mother and dad left home—Czechoslovakia—well, she never went back and naturally I never did. . . . I know who they were but I never did see them, which I kinda missed. That makes me feel bad that I never got to see my grandma and grandpa.

[My parents] came from a town that's called Mala Vrpka; see, that's in Czech, a Bohemian name yet, and it means "small village." It wasn't a big town there but it was kind of a smaller town. The people were more or less agricultural. They had farms and stuff like that.

They left Europe and Czechoslovakia like many other people would, to improve themselves, . . . to improve their living conditions. There were



friends here who had left before they did and wrote back that America was a wonderful place to live. You know, the streets were paved in gold and this was the place to be, the people had money here and nice homes and everything. They just came to improve their economic situation, hoping to learn the language and to get better jobs to earn more money and to buy a car . . . [to] improve their way of life and to buy better homes for their children and mainly, I guess, because some of the relatives were here and wrote back to Czechoslovakia how good it was living here. So they were just anxious to get over here and settle down—make a new home.

### **Mary Garand**

My mother came from Novachan [in Hungary] . . . and my father came from Pany. [My mother's] father died when she was very little. He had pneumonia and he died young and quick, and her mother died when she was thirteen. The house was burning and everybody ran out and nobody was hurt, but my grandmother ran back into the house to get her money that she wanted to save and never come back out. So, being left alone with a brother and a sister, an aunt sent for them and paid their way to come to this country. . . .

My father sent for his mother. She was sickly and he had her brought out to our house and she only lived at our house a few months and died.

### **Mike Dandar**

My mother's maiden name was Mary Kiraly which means "king" in the Hungarian language. She came from Cerhov. My dad came from Hradiste-Zemplen county, Trebisov district, in what is now Czechoslovakia. The name Dandar means "brigade" in Hungarian. In Slovak it means "flag bearer."

### **Elizabeth Borics**

[My parents] were born in Abasar, Hungary. . . . My father came first and he worked here for three

years until he saved enough money to send for my mother and then she came. We were all born here.

### **Priscilla Taylor**

My mother's name was Elizabeth and she came to this country when she was about thirteen years old. Could you imagine your daughter going to a foreign country when she was thirteen? She had a black shawl—that was all she had—and a dress, and this black [shawl], it was wool, made out of sheep or something and we still have it. It's in a trunk somewhere. But imagine a little girl like that coming all alone with just a shawl over her at thirteen.

### **William Szabo**

I was born of Hungarian parents in Toledo. My parents came here at a young age. My father told me he was about fifteen years old when he came here from Hungary from a village called Bukkszek. *Bukk* is "flax" and *szek* is chair. It is the equivalent of a state here. My mother came here to the United States and landed in Baltimore. My father came straight to Toledo. His father preceded him here. . . . Sometime later my grandfather went back but that was before my dad got married, and my dad stayed. The name of the place where my dad came from was Heves, that was in the equivalent of a state, and my mother was from Gomor Megye. Bukkszek, the village that my father came from, incidentally, was just west of Eger. The name of that town means "mouse." And my mother's village was Gomerpanyjit, but that is now in Czechoslovakia.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

My grandparents came from Hungary. . . . My father's parents were Mary and George Paczko. At some point after they came to this country, my uncle Joe was a professional boxer and he changed the spelling of the family name. As I understand it, it was because my grandmother would be very upset if she found out that he was boxing, so he used the

professional name of Packo. . . . I don't know what the reason was, but everyone in turn changed their name later as they went into business.

## **EDUCATION**

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

When I was going to school I could not speak a word in English because at home Hungarian was spoken. When I went to school, I had to learn the English language. The Hungarian language is a beautiful language and I'm happy to be able to speak it now. Some of the families I serve still speak mainly Hungarian. At those times my Hungarian comes in handy. So, I'm thankful of the fact that I can speak Hungarian.

### **Ann Wagner**

When I was little I stayed at my grandparents, and they refused to talk or answer me unless I spoke to them in Hungarian. When I was in grade school we had to take Hungarian classes every week which was conducted by Father Pintar and we learned to talk in and understand Hungarian. We had no choice, which we're very happy for right now.

### **William Szabo**

There was a sort of a national Hungarian paper, *The Freedom*, and my folks used to get that one and read it. In fact, I learned to read and write out of that one—just reading it and learning how to spell Hungarian words.

### **Frank Nagy**

There were many children in my grade, as I recall, who didn't speak much English. He (Steve Materny) never spoke to them except in English--none of the bilingualism for him as far as the children were concerned. They were here to become Americans and very proud of it, and even at his

assemblies he would be at the piano playing "America."

### **Mike Dandar**

We never did have a school [at St. Michael's] so just about all of the children that I can recall growing up with or from our church went to Birmingham school. A couple of them went to St. Stephen's school and [I'm] sure there must have been some that went to Holy Rosary.

I don't imagine schools were that much different than today. Maybe the discipline might have been a little bit more strict. There was an old saying that "if you were bad at school and got a licking, you got another one when you got home." Your parents were very, very embarrassed when you were singled out for punishment at school. Fortunately, they never found out how many times we were disciplined in school. The teachers had more power to nip trouble in the bud without being afraid of getting into trouble with the law or the parents. I would say that fifty, sixty percent of the children who went to Birmingham School were first-born generation, which would mean that their parents came from some other country and that usually meant that those people had a very strong sense of discipline: discipline in the home, discipline out in public.

### **Frank Drlik**

I graduated from grade school at Holy Rosary in 1930. . . . In some of the classes there were two grades in one class, like seventh and eighth were together and fifth and sixth were together 'cause they didn't have enough room and teachers and no money and all that. They had to save on everything. In fact, years ago the original Holy Rosary burned, the church and the school burned.

The school was a portable, it wasn't a regular building like they have now. It was a wooden portable and there was a furnace inside of that room, one big room where we all sat, you know; and the furnace then tried to keep that whole room

warm, and near the furnace you were hot and away from the furnace you were freezing.

### **William Szabo**

Monsignor Eordogh . . . he was a real disciplinarian. In fact, the priests usually visited the classrooms in those days. I don't know if they do it now or not, but when a priest walked into the room in those days everybody jumped to attention. They jumped and stood at attention and greeted him, "Good day Father so and so." I don't know if they do that now or not but anybody that was disciplined by him, he didn't forget too easily because he had what they called the "goompipe." He had a piece of garden hose and he'd lay it on as needed. "Here he comes with his goompipe." On the palm of the hand. And if you pulled your palm away so he missed, well, that doubled the dose. . . . But we were cut-ups—we were a tough lot.

### **Helen Georgoff Munson**

I went to Holy Rosary School and then when the church burnt down we all went to Birmingham School. When we graduated there was no Cardinal Stritch so part of my sisters and brothers went to Waite and to Central Catholic High School. I went to Waite but I quit. That was depression days and I come from a large family and you had to help the family.

### **Wilma Thomas**

[Monsignor Eordogh] was very strict and took a heavy hand in running the school, so much so that corporal punishment was administered by him when children misbehaved. It was a large school at that time, sometimes with seventy children in one class. The misbehaviors would be sent to him and he would do the disciplining with no interference from the parents.

### **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

At that time we got a licking in school, and if we

came home and told our parents, we got another licking. So nobody came home and told their parents when they were punished. And we had to stay after school and then we got homework to do, and we were put in a cloak room till sister thought we ought to come out.

For confirmation we had to learn our catechism in Hungarian at our church [Hungarian Reformed Church]. . . . During the summer we had summer school like they have vacation bible school now, but we had to go six to eight weeks and we could go on half a day and then we could play in the afternoons; but we also learned to read and write in Hungarian and sing a lot of Hungarian songs, and that's where we got a lot of our background.

### **William Szabo**

There was nothing negotiable, nothing was negotiable. You went and you took it, whatever they said and that was it. . . . We had a very fine old woman, a nun, [and] she'd say, "Now God is angry with all of you and you'd better hide under the desk" when it was lightning and thundering, and that spooked the daylights out of me. At home I wasn't taught to be afraid of a natural event like lightning and thunder and I just refused to go. So my parents said, "Well, go on to Birmingham School then," but we gotta go to school.

### **Ann Wagner**

[The nuns] were very strict and demanded all your potential. As long as you did your homework and listened you got along with them pretty well. We had no problems.

### **Mary Lenkay**

Reading, writing and arithmetic was the most things, and spelling. . . . We had to go out in a line and spell. If you didn't know your spelling, then the one kid came from behind to in front of you. The whole bunch had to do some spelling. That was the most important for those days: reading, writing and

arithmetic. Also we had Bible . . . every week.

Every Tuesday was no school for me because I had to help my mother wash. She had a tub and I had a tub and a washboard. A lot of kids had to stay home from school because their mothers went to wash people's clothes on Collingwood and all those rich places. Well, the bigger girls had to stay home and take care of the little ones, so they couldn't go to school that day. The sisters (teachers) said, "We can't do anything about it; they had to take care of the little ones."

### **Andrew Pocse**

In the spring of the year we used to go out in May and we'd miss the last part of school, and in the fall we'd go out in September, just about the time when school was starting. We'd go out to the sugar beets and we'd never come back till just before Thanksgiving. So, you can imagine just how much time we lost. So, when we went to school, we didn't know what was going on. We would just sit there like dummies; we didn't know nothing. It was rough, but that's the way it was.

I didn't go to school like the kids do today and I wasn't the only one. There were a lot of us that never got through grammar school. . . . If you had pretty good size to you, well, you were fourteen or so, you went to work. You didn't go to high school. There were very few kids that went to high school from the neighborhood when I was a kid. People couldn't afford it. You take some of the high school kids that are seventeen, eighteen years old that weigh a hundred and eighty, two hundred pounds and all that, why they'd be working in a foundry someplace as a laborer, not going to high school and all that, no way. You had to help the family. They had to have help.

### **Anna Pocse**

If you didn't want to go to high school you didn't have to, but then I don't know what year that came in that you had to go to school till you were

sixteen. When I graduated in '24 you didn't have to go to high school if you didn't want to.

### **Mary Garand**

I went to Waite School . . . night school, that was not day school. . . . We had only one teacher; we didn't go from room to room at night. It was a large class, pretty large. Two, three of my girlfriends, we all started out together.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

In the middle of the day all of us had to go to Mass before we went to school and the teacher picked maybe two, three of us fellas to go to the school to start the fire in the pot bellied stove, so by the time that Mass was out when the kids got into school the room would be warm. They didn't have steam heat and everything. We didn't have the lights, the windows we have today. It wasn't as convenient; we didn't have all the facilities you have today. Even the restroom, you had to go outside.

You didn't have to buy uniforms; you couldn't afford to. You bought whatever the mother and father could afford—that's what they wore to school—and the rest of the children accepted that. Maybe somebody went to school with a patch on the back of the pants but we didn't look down on that. We accepted that because we knew there wasn't that much money around for the people to buy new clothes all the time.

### **William Kertesz**

I attended Birmingham School. . . . From there I went to St. Stephen's and graduated in 1939. I did miss my graduation picture because I was in the hospital at the time getting an operation. I had to take the test in the convent while they were outside getting their graduation picture taken, and I wanted to go out and get in the picture and then come back and take the test, but they wouldn't allow it. So I hurried with the test, ran back out, but by then almost everyone was gone, and I think that was



the first time I started to cuss. It was disappointing and to this day—well, of course, I'm not on the picture—and it's a disappointment every time I look at the class.

### **Elmer Lucas**

At St. Stephen's School from the fourth, fifth grade on, every class would put on a play, skits. The school itself had a stage where the plays were performed and quite a bit of our activity there involved some sort of a Hungarian performance, if you spoke Hungarian. At this time of the year (February), there would always seem to be a practice for the Washington and Lincoln holidays. Some small segment of President Washington, George Washington's life would be presented or Abraham Lincoln's.

And throughout the year they always had the older students and the young people that had gone out of St. Stephen's already—and from other parishes, from Calvin United—they would have a theatre group there that would put on plays in Hungarian.

### **Velma Jambor Lengel**

We used to play on the stage a lot. We had nuns that taught us to play on the stage and I was in a couple of them—not very important parts but I was in them—and we sang and we came down from the attic on a rope and a swing. Then we'd say our little verses. . . . It was fun; the Hungarian sisters were a lot of fun that way. They became more modern and it was interesting to be in these plays because, you know, when you are chosen for something it makes you feel good.

### **Louis Kovacs**

I went to Vocational. . . . [If] you go down there you could learn a trade, like a carpenter, auto mechanics, machine shop, anything at all. At that time it was a popular school. They only had a certain amount of kids out of each school in Toledo and

you'd have to apply for it. . . . At that time it was a big thing to be a carpenter or a pipefitter or machinist.

### **Mary Lenkay**

Waite wasn't even built then when I was in school; Waite was built during the Great Depression. The girls didn't have a chance to go then; they didn't have the means to go either. Three girls went to high school; that's all at my age, that's all.

### **Lucy Romano Hornyak**

Well, when I went to school at Waite, it was very nice at that time. But, it was a little harder for kids to go to school then because we had to walk . . . and it was about three miles. We didn't have the money to get onto a bus. People didn't have money in them days. We didn't have clothes and a lot of things. It was a little harder. I had a chance to work, so I worked. I didn't finish out at school.

### **Agnes Gadus McDaniel**

Although we lived over a mile from the school and church we always walked. We had to since we did not have a car. When the weather was mild we would come home for lunch. Imagine walking four miles a day just to get back and forth to school.





## SECTION II

### RELIGION

#### **William Szabo**

On Genesee Street, which ran the length of Birmingham, on Sunday morning I remember in the nice days it was just lined with these old couples—the old man and his black suit, everybody seemed to wear black. The men wore black suits and the women wore black dresses, these long dresses, and their colorful babushkas. And there would be this old couple, arm in arm, trudging towards St. Stephen's to go to church—almost a procession, you know. Everybody turned out to go to church.

#### **Louis Kovacs**

That's one of the biggest high points we have at Birmingham. That church, you know, it is one of the strongest points. The people there are very religious and they have faith. They have their homes, and they want a church to go to on Sunday.

#### **Frank Nagy**

Churches began with the early settlements. Holy Rosary Church is the oldest. Originally it was founded on Paine Avenue—essentially where the library sits now—is my understanding. Calvin which was then the Magyar Reformatus and Templom was founded just across the street, in a wooden structure (where Wizer's sits). I understand that structure is still with us on Woodford Street and serves as a Baptist church for the Negro section of our community. St. Stephen's was founded in 1898 and enjoyed a very large Hungarian settlement. Holy Rosary was organized and moved to York Street where it sits even today. St. Michael's, the Byzantine, was established in 1914, if my understanding serves. I can remember as a child the singing of St. Michael's, the chants; they'll always be with me. They sang loudly, lustily and slowly.

### **Mike Dandar**

We had the four churches in the neighborhood: St. Stephen's, Calvin United, which was the Protestant church (it was called Hungarian Reformed at that time), Holy Rosary up on York Street, St. Michael's is also a Catholic church on Valentine and Bogar; and there was the black church on Woodford. I would say offhand that the people in the neighborhood—ninety to ninety-five percent of the people—went to church. I would say that almost one hundred percent belonged to some kind of church, but at least ninety to ninety-five percent went to church on Sundays, which was something you looked forward to because on Sundays you saw other people. You meet people who are in the neighborhood. That's why I know people from down on one end of the neighborhood to the other end of the neighborhood—coming to the churches and people from this end of the neighborhood going to churches in the other direction. The churches had doings, like chicken dinners, or dances. Usually people from other churches attended the other church's affairs as well as their own.

### **Mary Mahler**

Holy Rosary used to be called St. Ignatius; it was a French and German church. The parish was small so they combined the two churches. I don't remember the exact year but we all combined together and it was named Holy Rosary. At first there were hurt feelings but as time went by the French, Germans and Slovaks became good friends and worked together.

Father Pirnat was our pastor and stayed at Holy Rosary till he passed away. Father Pirnat was a kind and good priest who did a lot for the poor. He helped many people with food and coal for their stoves so they would be warm and not hungry. He was a humanitarian who had a big heart.

### **Lucy Romano Hornyak**

When I was younger . . . you never would

think of going into a church of a different faith than yours. . . . When we lived near Holy Rosary we were Italian and they didn't have much to do with the Italians at that church at that time. It was more of a Slavish church, you know. Slavish people belonged there and they had their traditional things. But then when we became a member of St. Stephen's we sort of went to the Hungarian things because my husband is Hungarian.

### **Helen Georgoff Munson**

We lived in this neighborhood and most people went to St. Stephen's because they were of Hungarian descent. They did not allow anybody else there either. Holy Rosary was Roman Catholic and French; they did not allow anybody else. Most of the people went to the Greek Catholic church, so they were automatically a Greek Catholic. But, later in life as the family grew we lived in front of Holy Rosary and the children all went to Holy Rosary and were baptized at Holy Rosary, and I'm the only one baptized a Greek Catholic.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

Grandma Packo was one of the founders of St. Stephen's Church and she was quite a cook. She did a lot of the cooking for the church functions and for Monsignor Eordogh, and that's probably where the family got the biggest interest in cooking.

### **Margaret Brezvai**

People really stuck with their faith and religion and they kept it up. I mean, they never missed going to church. To them, I guess, faith was everything. With all the doings they had and everything else they were really all the time in church doing a lot. In those days the priest was your confessor, counselor and your friend.

They had church festivals together and everything else. They stuck together. . . . Although the people had different faiths—Catholic, Protestant and Greek Catholics—we were all Hungarians.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

You dressed up for church. A woman put on her nicest dress, her finest hat. . . . If anybody had a suit they only wore it once a week, on a Sunday to go to church.

### **Margaret Brezvai**

You had a priest here that wanted you to go to church and you couldn't miss church. You couldn't miss devotions. You had to really be of strong faith. He wanted you to go to Sunday devotions, October devotions—we never missed devotions. The children always went to church, not with their parents, but by the class. The whole church would be filled with the classes. They were very strict about that. They were strict about everything but they were most of all strict about having the children go to church. The children's Mass was at nine o'clock Sunday mornings.

### **Wilma Thomas**

It was the custom that the men sat on one side of the church and women on the other, but by the time I came here they had begun to sit together.

The High Mass was the ten o'clock Mass, celebrated in the Hungarian language. It was different from the other Masses because it had more music and was more solemn. There was incense at the High Mass. It was a higher type of worship. The men's choir always sang, with members numbering twenty to twenty-five. . . .

The church [St. Stephen's] was different in some ways because it had much more of a European flavor. Monsignor Eordogh was the pastor at that time, and he was born and reared in Hungary. His family had been made members of the nobility by the Hapsburg rulers. He was a very strong person and the parishioners would follow his lead in anything that he wished to do. He was above them, above their class, because most of them were peasants when they came here. So, it was a different church at that time and not so much of the people,



as it is now. It has grown in that way under Father Hernady's direction, with the people participating much more in the running of the parish than they did when I came here.

Monsignor Eordogh's attitude was that of a person belonging to the nobility, similar to what you would have found in Europe. His family had been made members of the nobility. There are legends surrounding that. I've heard it said that some member of the ruling Hapsburg family was hunting and wounded his prey, a wild boar. The animal began to attack the hunter, and a member of the Eordogh family is supposed to have shot the boar and saved the hunter. As a reward, the family was given the status of nobility.

When Monsignor Eordogh came here, he continued to live much as he had in Europe, as far as I could observe. His power in the neighborhood was absolute almost, not only in church matters but in the social lives of his parishioners. He was respected in political circles, and his power over his parishioners and their respect for him was unlimited, so that he ruled with an iron hand.

### **Velma Jambor Lengel**

[Monsignor Eordogh] was from a good family and he was sort of princely. We used to call him "the prince" sometimes. His name was Eordogh, which means "the devil." And he asked my brother once if he really was a *yambor*, because *yambor* means "pious," and my brother said "Are you really a devil?" And he says, "That's a good question" and he gave him credit for having the nerve to ask him, I guess. He was very tough with the kids and later on he got to be real sad.

Father Reineck was here for quite a while. The kids liked him, of course; he was more modern. He was younger; he played ball with them and all that stuff. We had the sister's house on Genesee, too. The Notre Dame nuns didn't live here. They lived in their convent on Bancroft Street and the Hungarian sisters lived over here.

### **Elizabeth Borics**

The biggest fire I ever seen was when our old church [Holy Rosary] burned down and that was about forty-six years ago, somewhere about that time ago. We woke up in the night and we heard the sirens, you know. We just knew that something was bad and we looked out the window; we saw everything was just orange with fire. . . . We went and got dressed and went over and watched. But it was very, very cold and we probably stayed there about an hour and then we went home and back to bed. At that time Father Anthony Pirnat was our pastor and it was a big shock to him to have the church burn down. We had a coal furnace and it was just overheated.

### **Mary Bence**

St. Stephen's was blessed in 1914 and I was born in 1915, so the church was only six months old at the time and then during that time everything was put into the church. The church itself is the same, other than it had been painted. I think it was painted in about 1940 and then 1970, and then right after the painting the church was burned. The sacristy was burned, and we had a lot of smoke damage.

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

Revered by St. Stephen parishioners as their special treasure is the painting of Our Lady of Gyor, the "Irish Madonna." Our painting is a copy of the original painting presented to Bishop John Pusky of Gyor, Hungary, by Bishop Lynch of Ireland as an expression of gratitude to the Hungarian people for granting him sanctuary during the British persecution of Roman Catholics in 1665. Bishop Schrembs presented the painting to the Hungarian people of the new St. Stephen's at a dedication ceremony in 1914.

### **Priscilla Taylor**

I went to Sunday school every Sunday. There

was Bible school during the summer and we had six to eight weeks of that. We learned to read, write, sing and dance in Hungarian. We used to put on three-act plays that were also in Hungarian. We had to sing in choir every Sunday; when you turned thirteen, after you had catechism you were asked to sing in the choir; that's when we started. . . . Before we were allowed to go to the movies, we had to go to Youth Fellowship and we had to go every Sunday to that; that was in the afternoon. In those days it was called Christian Endeavor and it was more church, church things we talked about.

### **Ann Lucas**

We had a sodality group that was for grade school children, a sodality group that was for high school girls and we also had a follow-up through sodality that was for single young women. Each one of these groups was very active with their meetings and their bake sales, and they were groups where you knew everyone on a first-name basis and you knew them practically from the cradle. In our sodality, the months of October and May were especially set aside to honor the Blessed Virgin Mary. The school children would have a beautiful procession that included the sodalities of the three age groups and we would fill the church. We would carry the statue along the aisles and it was a deeply moving religious experience.

The activities were more church related than they are today. Ever since World War II people have taken the notion to move out to the suburbs. Naturally, other people have come in to fill the vacuum. They have taken over the older homes—people that are not affiliated with the church. And, in the old days, more or less, the church was always the hub. Here in Birmingham we were blessed with three, four well-integrated churches whose main concern was the lifeblood of the neighborhood.

### **Elizabeth Borics**

I don't think they have changed our particu-

lar church as much as they have some of the others since Vatican II. The only difference now is it is now in English, where at that time the Mass was all said and sung in Latin. . . . Being in the choir, we knew seven Latin Masses, and they did tell us to hold onto those Masses because some day we might have them back. We don't know, we're hoping so. They do use part of them, on occasions, like we did last Sunday.

### **John Bistayi**

Well now that—what happens today—is a sad thing compared to what it used to be in the old days. But you must remember there's a very good reason for that: that generation has died off—probably ninety-five percent of those older people have—and all the churches have lost membership due to the fact that the old generation, that generation is gone. All of that generation is gone and the generation after that, that's probably eighty percent gone.

And one of the big obstacles is that out of the four churches that we have in the neighborhood, probably each one of these churches has the same problem. They have only twenty percent of their membership live in the neighborhood; eighty percent moved out into the suburbs of the city. They come to church—yes it's their home church—but this is one of the big obstacles that you have to contend with in keeping the neighborhood alive.

But in the past this church (Calvin United) held five hundred and fifty people, and on any given Sunday if you had less than four hundred people it had to be very bad. Eighty percent of the membership came to church Sundays. There was only one service and services never lasted an hour; services were two hours! It was a singing congregation; they loved to sing. They'd sing seven or eight songs. Now we sing two or three hymns. But, like I say, that's a thing of the past. Those people are gone.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

The church is part of your life. Part of the family. . . . If somebody needs something you would just do it. Yes, I guess it started with Grandma. You just don't think of the church as being separate from your life. That's not an outsider, that is part of your life.

## **WORK**

### **Frank Nagy**

Birmingham proper became started because of the industry that was naturally attracted to it—the readily available coal that came down from the Mesabi Range by lake freighter and also the coal that came up Ohio, Pennsylvania and chiefly West Virginia. The site of the iron ore and so forth were at the mouth of the river and throughout Birmingham—United Malleable Casting, the U.S. Malleable, Maumee Malleable—these are all names that are familiar to us. They took raw iron ore and converted it into a type of iron product. Hungarians were chiefly attracted to this region by these industries because there was . . . iron making going on in Europe, particularly in Miskolc, which is a town in northeastern Hungary, famous today much as Pittsburgh is.

### **William Szabo**

All along the river these metal industries flourished. . . . They needed shipping, which the river provided—a loading facility there like there is out here in Oregon at the lake front. . . . They'd run the cars up there, push them up and this thing would dump the coal into the boats and haul the coal to Detroit or Chicago, and that's one reason why this Birmingham steel industry was where it was. . . . Coal came from the southern coal fields, the iron ore came on the ships from up around Duluth and the iron ore ranges up in that area, and they had a lot of limestone in the area. There were the neces-

sary ingredients for making steel, so it was . . . a convenient location for that industry. It was in the center of the source of supply for all the things that went into the steel industry.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

Birmingham started way back when a company moved over here from Cleveland and opened up a foundry. And a lot of these people came from Cleveland, New Jersey and all over to work in the foundry, and that's how Birmingham grew.

### **William Szabo**

The people that were here would write home and say, "Hey they're putting men on, just come on out. We've got a job for you." You see, in those days of industrial expansion in the United States they needed a lot of labor and these peasant people would come to this country and get jobs. Many of them were moulders. The jobs here in the casting company were moulders and core makers; the men poured molten iron. They'd go to the furnace, two men carrying between them a kind of large cauldron, and they'd run some molten metal into that and they'd take that over to where the moulds were. Each man would make moulds and I guess it was sort of piece work. In the latter part of the day they would pour these moulds full with the molten metal. It (being a moulder or core maker) was a beast of a job. It didn't take much brains; the stronger your back the happier everybody was over it. Now, I remember one thing about that place; it made an awful lot of noise in various parts of the process—the moulding and cleaning up the things they moulded. And a lot of heat was involved in that huge factory.

### **Andrew Pocse**

They were all in the same boat, I would say, easy seventy-five percent or more couldn't read or write or anything like that in the neighborhood at that time—the old timers, the ones from Europe—

'cause that's the way they were raised in Europe. They didn't go to school, they'd just go to work when they were old enough.

### **Mary Bence**

As a kid, I used to stand on the bridge and watch [the Hocking Valley Dock]. They would lift up a car with coal in it and dump the whole thing right into that boat. Now everything is way out . . . in Oregon, because that's where the Port Authority is, that's where they do that now. But it used to be right here and we used to stand on the Ash-Consaul Bridge and watch all these things being dumped into the boat.

### **William Kertesz**

As a youngster I remember taking lunch to my father at the shipyard; it was only about six blocks away. I would stand at the side gate with his lunch bucket: sausage or ham on vienna bread from the National Bakery, maybe an apple and a small cake with coffee. When the noon whistle blew (I get kinda lumpy here) he came toward the gate in his big leather apron and dirty hat and he'd say, "Bela Fiam," my son Bill. And if there were not "big wheels" in town or around the shipyard he would take me into the blacksmith shop and set me on a seat in the corner and tell me to "stay there, don't move," and from there I would see the huge ship in the dry dock and watch him and his big German helper, Otto, operate those huge steam hammers. Not too many kids had an opportunity like me. He worked there for forty-seven years.

My mother worked at her aunt's bar on Genesee as a cleaning lady and there she met my father and they were married on October 23, 1911, at Saint Stephen's Church. He was twenty-three and she was sixteen; they lived above her aunt's. Soon after, they moved back to Wauseon, Ohio, for a job. He earned ten cents an hour. He later moved back to Toledo when he was offered a job at twelve cents an hour as a blacksmith at the Toledo Ship-

building Company.

### **Helen Georgoff Munson**

My mother didn't work, . . . my mother had boarders. Most of these people worked at Interlake Iron. Almost every Hungarian, Italian, Slavish people all had boarders; somebody had to put these people up someplace.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

Grandma had quite an interest in cooking and probably passed it on to all of her boys. . . . Before they got married, [my father] worked for his brother John. John Packo had a restaurant, and after my brother Bob was born in 1928 he started thinking about opening up his own place, which he did do in 1932. . . They borrowed \$100 from my mother's mother and opened—it was not a tavern at that time because it was still Prohibition—it was kind of a combination of ice cream store and I think at that time they might have called it a confectionery, some ice cream and sandwiches.

My brother Bob worked all through grade school. He always had jobs to do. During the war there were no men to help in the restaurant so Bob would have to scrub the whole place every morning before he went to school. So, he would wake up at five a.m. When we went to Central, we missed one study period, and we got out at two or two-thirty. We would miss the big rush and get home quicker to help them. After his four years of doing that, they automatically put me on the same schedule, so I never had many friends or extra activities because of leaving early. I had friends but I never fiddled around with kids at the bus stop or did whatever they were doing after school.

My friends would help me with my chores that my mother outlined for us. Very often two or three of my girlfriends would come and we would just peel potatoes. We would sit around a fifty-pound bag of potatoes and just start peeling; finish that one, and then bring out the next one. The whole



family had to work there. We were open seven days a week. I do remember being really hurt that my parents couldn't come to any of my school functions because they were always working there. We never had any days off, but after a few disappointments you realize that was your life and that was it. Just the way it had to be. They worked fourteen to sixteen hours a day, seven days a week. They did the best they could.

### **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

Grandpa Bodak bought half a city block of buildings on Craig Street from the old Craig Ship-building Co. He opened a used furniture store and a hauling business on the corner of Craig and Bakewell. He also rented houses to people in Birmingham. After my mother and father, Sigmund Weizer, got married they bought the furniture store from my grandfather. I was born and raised in the furniture business.

### **William Szabo**

And, I'll tell you, they were a proud lot. They were willing to work hard—not just my parents, all those people. They were very hard workers. When I look at some of the things they built and are still standing and you think in terms of the work it represents, why there's the sweat and the blood of those people.

### **Anna Pocse**

I started working, maybe in 1932. It was my first job. At the Secor I was making twenty cents an hour and sometimes I worked ten hours a day. I remember when I went to apply for my Social Security the lady that was interviewing me asked if I remembered my first job that I had and I said, "Oh, yeah." She [asked] would I remember what I was makin' an hour and I said, "twenty cents," and she says, "WHAT!" and I said, "Yeah, I was makin' twenty cents an hour," and she says, "Oh, come on!" I said, "I was makin' twenty cents an hour and then after

the NRA came in then we were makin' twenty-five, I mean forty-five cents, and that was tops." That was tops even for a man.

### **Helen Georgoff Munson**

I did work at Mercy Hospital as a nurse's aid. Then I worked for Zimmerman's Restaurant, learning how to make salads. I was a waitress and then I thought I'd do more interesting things, and getting a job in a factory meant making more money. Well, in them days money was good, you could save and money was valuable. You could buy a lot of things with just a few bucks.

When I first started working in a factory I only got about twenty-five cents an hour. And, of course that was all piece work, but you had to work your tail off to make money.

### **Andrew Pocse**

I went to work when I was around nine or ten years old. I worked in the sugar beet fields and you talk about work—that is work! They'd pay us so much an acre. There was four of us kids and my mother and father. There was six of us and we used to go out and pick sugar beets every summer for I don't know how many years; at least until I was about seventeen years old. See, that's one reason I didn't go to school.

### **Agnes Gadus McDaniel**

There were many things to do in the summer and we were kept busy working for the different farmers within two or three miles from our homes. We picked red raspberries and black raspberries for a farmer by the name of Mr. Fox. We also picked cherries, beans and peas. The farmers paid us twenty-five cents a bushel for the beans and peas and sometimes we earned one whole dollar for a whole day's work, and we thought that was just great. We had no other transportation so we walked to the farms. Imagine walking three miles just to get to work, and three miles back!

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

My grandmother was a housewife and my grandfather worked at the brick yard, which was across the first railroad track here on Consaul. And I used to take him a basket with a lunch at noon. And my uncles worked there, and later one of my uncles had an orchestra. He became a mailman, my other uncle. They both worked for the Gendron; they made bicycles. And my uncle, in his younger days, he could make lamps woven from reed, and buggies.

### **Mary Mahler**

My first job was when my mother used to go to the onion fields. We used to get up at five o'clock in the morning, walk to Keller's (way down on Wynn and Bay Shore) and stay there all day. We'd pick up these seed onions, half a bushel for five cents, and then later on I picked raspberries—when I was older, strawberries, cherries, anything that came along. Then when I graduated from school (at that time when you were fourteen you could get into a factory, but you had to go one day to school), I worked at the National Malleable on Front Street.

At the Malleable I made eleven dollars a week. At Jeep you got paid [by] how many cushions you made and I think I got about ten dollars, not too much because I only stayed there a short time—two, three days—because it was heavy work. From there I went (1928) . . . [to] the Auto Lite; that's where I stayed till when I got married. I had to quit because there was no leave of absence for pregnancy, and I went back in 1934 and worked until 1962 when they closed. And, then from there I stayed home; I didn't work.

### **Frank Drlik**

My dad mainly did labor type of work. Of course, I think when they first got here, they may have helped out working on the farms, you know, because they knew people here that had farms. In fact my two uncles had big farms in Flint, Michigan.

[They] . . . had come here before they did and then they worked on the farms—wanted to learn the English language and start making a few dollars and then consequently they got better jobs. I remember my dad worked at the Toledo Shipbuilding Company, where they build and repair lake vessels that ply the Great Lakes. . . . He was what they call a bolter-up; he helped bolt up the big plates on the boats as they were putting them together, and of course he did a lot of other work in due time. And, I also know that for a while he worked at what they call . . . the Ohio Brick Company, used to be a brick company on Consaul Street near the railroad. . . I think he drove a team of horses that hauled bricks after they were made.

### **Mary Bence**

I worked for different families in the west end, what is now known as the Old West End. That was what they would call the elite or the richer people than we are; they had more income than we did. I worked for three dollars a week. Later I worked for four dollars a week, and finally I got up to ten dollars a week. The highest I ever got for doing housework was fifty dollars a month.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

First my ma came out. She used to go to work, do housework for two dollars a day for the people in west Toledo and she used to get off, she said, two days a week, twice a week—that is on Sunday, and half a day on Thursday—and then she had to go back and work for the people. Well, maybe some of the people that she worked for, they owned the factories or they had businesses, or school teachers. They wanted help to come to stay all day if they had children, so the children be taken care of. They had washing, ironing, cooking, cleaning. They really had to work and they paid very little for them and they always had to come home on the streetcar. There was never transportation whatsoever for the poor people. They had to come home on the buses.

We had streetcars over here.

And then my ma and dad were married over here and they had two little boys—must have been three, four years old—and there was no work in Toledo, so my daddy moved away to West Virginia, in the coal mines. That's where he worked for forty years, and thank God he never got hurt because there's a lot of them that went into that coal mine, they never came out 'cause something happened to them. Either they got killed by the gas, they got killed by the slate (which is like growing into the mountain with the coal; see, there's slate also in coal) and if you didn't take care of your room that's where they put the coal out of, the coal would fall on them or the slate and they couldn't get out and they got buried in it. I'm so thankful that my daddy worked there forty-some years [and] he never got hurt.

### **William Szabo**

On Genesee Street, there was a beer joint operated by John Petro. I'd go over to the gate at the Malleable on Front Street and I could carry four little buckets. Each little enamel bucket would hold more than a quart of beer—just a little over a quart of beer—and they had little lids. And I could carry two of those on my fingers, two on each hand, and I'd go over to Petro's and pay twenty cents for the four buckets of beer and the guys gave me twenty-four cents. I'd get a penny for each bucket of beer that I carried over to the gate.

### **Andrew Pocse**

They had a big Malleable there on Front Street which they tore down. People used to work over there. My father worked there. The biggest part of all the old timers, they worked there and some worked in the flour mill, some worked in Interlake Iron, places like that, here on the East Side. And that was hard work.

I used to carry coal and then I worked in the foundry when I was about fifteen, sixteen years old.

I worked right in the foundry with the guys, with the men. That was bad; twelve hours a night—start at five o'clock in the afternoon and work till five in the morning—twelve hours, and that was tough.

They weren't paying nothing then, that's what was wrong. See, the people like my father, that was the reason that kids had to go to work when they did because they had to have help at home. See, my father worked over here at the Malleable and he used to bring home maybe between five or seven or eight dollars a week at the most. I know that things were a lot cheaper than they are now but even then there wasn't enough because then people, say they paid their rent or whatever, and put groceries on the table for the kids—everybody had two, three, four kids—and after they paid the bills and stuff there was nothing left. They had to have help and that's why the kids had to go to work when they did. . . .

Well, then they could work you ten, twelve, fifteen, sixteen hours a day and it was all straight time. You couldn't ask for anything because they didn't have to give it if they didn't want to because you were standing alone. And the wages were almost nothing—twenty, thirty cents an hour. That's why Franklin Roosevelt, I believe, is the reason he brought the unions in, gave the people the right to organize. So, they could, you know, get something out of them, and it made a big change 'cause everybody started getting an increase in wages. I know where I worked—and I was lucky, I don't know why—they gave me forty cents an hour then after the NRA came in. I found out that I was working with guys making twenty cents an hour and I didn't even know it. I was the top dog then and after the NRA came in it was law they had to pay everyone at least forty cents an hour.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

They used to make pig iron, most of the people that came from Europe. This was their first job; they had pig iron, they had coal or coke or something. In them days the factories didn't have

any ventilation like they have now, but they had pollution like we have today. It was bad because my dad inhaled all this poison gas. There was no union so the bosses got away with holy hell and murder in them days and a lot of people died from this poison gas, dust, dirt.

### **Andrew Pocse**

There were no pensions of any kind and as far as benefits were concerned, there was nothing. In fact, we had life insurance that we had to pay out of our own checks. But there was nothing at all, there was nothing—no vacations, no pension plan, no sick, no nothing. See, the labor unions brought that in after. I'm not sure when they brought that in, but it would have to be probably, maybe after World War II. That's the way it was.

## **RECREATION**

### **Elmer Lucas**

[The neighborhood] was really fairly close knit. We knew the immediate families around—plenty of children. Enough children in there for games, the games you decided to play—tag, blacksmith, ball. There were always enough boys to take part in all the games.

### **John Hornyak**

I had five brothers and four sisters. Everybody on Magyar Street was like one big family. Everybody had a lot of children so we all played together.

### **William Pasztor**

This neighborhood was a fun place to grow up in. There always were some activities, a ballgame on almost every corner, softball game, or we'd play kick the can, hide-and-go seek.

And a short distance away from here on

Consaul Street was a hole that we called the Old Pit. The ground was taken out and used to make bricks . . . for the brick yard on Consaul Street. . . . They dug this deep hole to get the clay 'cause this clay was especially suited to making brick to build homes with and that's why the hole is there. They went down till they hit water. Cattails grew in there and we used to spend time among the cattails catching frogs.

### **Mary Garand**

We enjoyed ourselves. That's all there was to do then, was to play outdoors and just play with anything. We didn't have many toys; we never had bicycles, like children do now. I spent a lot of my time at my aunt's house playing her organ. I loved it. She would let me go into her parlor, which she kept closed always. It was just open to company, but because I loved the organ I was allowed to go in there.

### **Louis Kovacs**

Kids in them days, they didn't have much to do. We used to play lots of marbles—you know, go out and shoot marbles. We had agates; we'd pretty near tell how rich you were by the amount of marbles you had. You owned a lot of marbles, had a lot of agates. Kids played checkers and played different little things. A lot of them grew up to play ball; most of them didn't even have a ball mitt . . . just had to play without mitts. They'd get a bushel basket, throw at the basket; that's how they played basketball.

### **William Szabo**

Our parents were extremely hard-working people and we were just the next step away from them, and our lives were harsh. You know, in those days we didn't get a \$20 ball glove or a \$20 football. The boys wore black knee-length stockings. You know what we played ball with? Some kids would have stockings that would have a hole in the knees



from kneeling on the sidewalk playing marbles. You take that stocking and stuff it full of rags or other bad stockings and roll it and tie it tight in a ball shape; that was our softball. As kids we didn't play on the grass-covered football fields. Over there on the cinders, when you got tackled, boy, you got abrasions from the cinders. You looked like somebody had taken a file to you.

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

After the vespers Sunday afternoon we'd take our suits and walk across the bridge. On weekdays we had a bakery man; he had a horse and wagon and would give us a ride across the bridge, and we'd take our lunch during the week and swim and walk back home. It was simple pleasures in those days. . . . I had one brother that played miniature golf in the yard and we played on the streets with a rubber ball, and simple pleasures because that's all we had money for.

### **Ann Lucas**

When I was a little girl there seemed to be more neighborhood activities—activities that were centered here in our own area and you didn't have to get in an automobile and drive for miles to get to.

### **Andrew Pocse**

In the wintertime we used to hang around on the corners and the cars would stop, and when they'd start out we used to hang on to the bumpers and get down in a crouch and, like skiers, we'd go after them and hang on, and the car would pull us, and we used to go all over the neighborhood that way. Sometimes the cars would stall; they couldn't pull us, there were too many of us on the back end. We used to do that a lot. . . .

During the day in the summertime we used to hang around the railroad track in that field here off Paine Avenue and wait for the freights to come down. And when they'd come down they used to have the watermelons stacked up in the boxcar and we'd

open up the boxcar doors and pitch out a half dozen or two dozen watermelon and put them out in the field there and sit down and eat. We'd pass them out to whoever needed a watermelon. We had it there for them. That was the only way to get watermelon. We didn't have no money to buy watermelon. . . .

We swam in the river. It was all deep water; there was no fooling around there. We put up diving boards and we just dived in and swam like little fish. In the mornings we used to go to the river and we'd always meet the *City of Toledo* or the *Greyhound* boat, or whichever it was at the time; and they'd always come through there about 9:30 in the morning, and they used to have these trips every day to Put-in-Bay and Cedar Point from Toledo. Every day they had it and we used to swim out to the channel. We knew when it was coming and we'd dive in and we'd swim out there and we'd wait for it. And we'd be out there waving to the people and they'd know we was going to be there and they'd stand on the side of the boat and wave back at us. We was just kids and when the boat would go by, well then we'd swim back to shore. And then a lot of times we'd go back in the evening when it was coming back.

### **Victoria Oravec**

We took walks at night, I did anyway. My girlfriends, we walked across the Ash-Consaul bridge and we went for an ice cream soda or sundae in one of the drugstores. We had a lot of fun. . . . And then they had concerts in Riverside Park and we used to go hear the concerts. They always had a band there every Sunday night. It was nice.

### **Ann Wagner**

We didn't get too much opportunity to go many places. We went roller skating or we went to a football game, or maybe dances that the church had down in the school or the church basement. But otherwise we were pretty tame at the time. We weren't too rowdy or wild.

### **Mary Lenkay**

Ball games, swimming picnics, and other gatherings took place at the parks in and around the Birmingham neighborhood. Collins Park was the location, but the school fields, the railroad tracks and local clubs were also popular meeting grounds for various activities. The Grant Murray Field was one of the first with lights. It used to be where the Weiler public housing is now.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

In those days in Birmingham—where Birmingham Terrace is now—there used to be a park. You would have three ballgames going on a Sunday afternoon. At Interlake Iron field there was two ballgames, at Collins Park there would be maybe four ballgames. So, Sunday afternoon everybody would be going to ballgames. There were a lot of activities.

### **Andrew Pocse**

We had our own football fields and baseball fields out here off of Paine Avenue. . . . And of course the kids from around Consaul they played, probably, on where the Terrace is now. They called it the Bakewell Field. Across Front Street they had the old Birmingham Booster field. There was plenty of room there for the kids to play.

### **William Szabo**

They had baseball diamonds out there and there were some very excellent baseball teams in that neighborhood and the other surrounding ethnic communities, and they came there on Sunday. Picnic basket and ballgames at Collins Park was a big item for many, many families.

### **Mary Mahler**

On Sunday we had ballgames. The people used to gather over there at Collins Park. They had a band; they had gymnastics. The park was very active in the old days even during the weekdays.

They'd go out there and lay under the trees and the children would play and dance and they had a platform there, but mostly it was athletics. The gymnast[s] would go out there and we would go watch them. The boys would play ball and it was a real active park all the days when we were children. They used to go swimming in the creek there.

### **Agnes Gadus McDaniel**

During the summertime I remember walking across the Ash-Consaul bridge (which was demolished when they built the Craig bridge). On Sunday afternoon [we'd go] to the Franklin Ice Cream Store on Summit Street to buy a double-dip ice cream cone for five cents; [a] single dip was three cents.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

There used to be an ice cream store on Summit Street and everybody in the evening walked across the old Ash-Consaul bridge with the girlfriend or the boyfriend or a bunch of us girls or a bunch of men and bought ice cream. And we walked back—back and forth in the summertime. And Collins Park, in the olden days we used to walk out there, just to get out. Sunday afternoons, the older people used to go out there with the buggies with their babies and spend the afternoon. The guys used to go out there and play baseball and the women would watch them.

### **Priscilla Taylor**

During the summertime we'd get a group of kids together and we'd go to Franklin's Ice Cream Store and just sit and goof off—and have sodas and talk and meet with all our friends—and then we'd walk back and then we'd go home. When we had dates we did just about the same thing; walk across the bridge and back and forth, and we'd go for ice cream and we'd go bowling; so we would just really hang around.

### **Ann Wagner**

We had Tarczali Soda Shop located down here across from Calvin United Church. We used to gather there after school. We had chips and pop, we had the juke box to listen to and a lot of talking.

Also at that time we had Reeds Variety Store down across from the library on the corner of Bakewell and Paine Avenue. It was a variety store [where you] can get sundaes and all kinds of items. . . . We had the Red Star Drug Store located next to the old fire station on Front Street. My mom used to work there and we used to get some pretty good sundaes and sodas.

### **Velma Jambor Lengel**

Through my childhood . . . the only place we played was where the Terrace is now. . . . It was a big field owned by the railroad track, and that's where our baseball games were and our circuses that used to come to town. We played out there every day and it was a big, big lot there, about ten, fifteen acres or more. . . . We kids named that Thorn Apple Field—they had thorn apple trees and so that's what it was named.

### **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

We had lots of fun! We used to go to Collins Park a lot. I can remember going there and going to the swimming pool. They used to have the shelter house there, too, that we used to go in the summer-time for crafts. Often at Christmas we'd have Christmas parties there.

### **Agnes Gadus McDaniel**

For recreation during the summer we would walk to Riverside Park on Summit Street to go swimming in the pool since there was no pool at Collins Park at that time. I remember my older cousin who had a job and bought a victrola, and on Sunday afternoons we would go over to her house and listen to records. Sometimes her mother would bake *slovak kolach* which was a real treat for us.

Most of the social events were held at our church and usually our entire family would go to the ice cream socials, dances and dinners. These were really the main events in our lives.

### **Priscilla Taylor**

We used to go on hayrides, we used to go on picnics, we used to go to Pearson Park and play ball and [we] rode our bicycles; we played tennis and during the wintertime we went to Pearson Park and ice skated; we played hockey with the boys—and they really creamed our ankles. And in the summer-time we played a form of hockey—kick the can—but we had hockey sticks and we were on roller skates. We played in the middle of the streets. . . .

We'd sit on the porch and talk and tell jokes and stories. We never drank beer, we never smoked cigarettes but we always had fun. . . . Oh, another thing we girls liked to do [was] have pajama parties. About once a month we'd get together and just be silly, pop popcorn, and during the war (I don't know where we got some Hawaiian skirts from) each of us had our pictures taken with the Hawaiian skirt—really dramatic!

### **Mary Garand**

I had several girlfriends and we'd take a walk to Riverside Park during the summer and go swimming. We'd go to Collins Park to play on the swings. They didn't have a swimming pool when I was young in Collins Park; we had to go to Riverside Park to go swimming.

### **Lucy Romano Hornyak**

I liked to read quite a bit when I was young and I made a lot of use out of the library, because at that time it wasn't like you had TV or anything, or [could] afford to go buy magazines and that. So the books, that was really nice. I would say that I used the library myself when I was a youngster quite a bit. And I always thought it was so beautiful in there. . . . It always inspired me.

### **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

At the age of ten I joined the Hungarian Reformed Church Girl Scout Troop and the troop number was seven; and that means that we probably had the seventh group in Toledo, so, you know, that was a good many years ago. There weren't too many troops, and I guess the numbers are much, much higher today. We had lots of fun. Betty Balasz and Elizabeth Komaromy were our leaders. Later Ethel Molnar became our leader. I think we had the best troop in Toledo and I was one of the lucky scouts that got to go to camp for a couple of years. In those days—in the 1930s, during the Great Depression—people just didn't have any money and it was seven dollars a week to go to camp. Somehow, I got a scholarship and part of the money was paid by the troop and my parents paid the rest of it.

### **Mary Garand**

We had a Catholic Community Club on Genesee Street. That was one of our very favorite places to go to be entertained. They had a player piano and they had a Miss Cavanaugh. She was an overseer of all the young people. I met a lot of young people there that I wouldn't have known that came from all over the East Side and we'd sing and learn how to do things. They'd show us; it was like a place to learn to do things that you didn't do at school. . . . I spent a lot of time there.

They had the player piano always going, somebody, all kinds of "up-to-the-minute" records. That's how I knew all my songs. I used to know all the old songs that went by years ago, and our parents let us go. If I went through the back yard . . . I came down Bogar and I was right there. I passed the Reformed church, it was in the next block. So, it was easy to get to and it was not in the dark, it was in the daytime. Saturday and Sunday it was open, I think, to all people but I think mostly Catholics went to it.

### **Louis Kovacs**

We'd sometimes go bowling, so we would really just hang around. We had a bowling alley in the neighborhood and that's where we spent a lot of time, bowling. So we really just hung around in the summertime.

### **Joseph "Fudgie" Wlodarz**

The Playdium I've known for over fifty years. They had the best bowling establishment that there was in East Toledo. And they also had dances upstairs. . . . They also had a lot of banquets up there that I know of. And to me the Playdium itself was one of the main establishments in Birmingham.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

The Playdium? I remember going here as a little girl to the Hungarian shows with my grandmother. They put on performances up there—it was a theatre upstairs—and she would take me to the shows. They were live productions. And very often the Hungarian movie stars would come into the restaurant, so I would always get a double shot at seeing everybody.

### **Agnes Gadus McDaniel**

When I was thirteen I can remember that there were two movie theatres: the Palm on Paine Avenue and the Tivoli on Consaul Street. When I was very young there also was a theatre on Front Street. This was during the time of silent movies. Admission was usually ten or fifteen cents.

### **Ann Wagner**

We had two theatres. We had the Star Theatre, which was located next to the Hungarian Club, and we also had the movie theatre, Tivoli, down on Consaul Street. . . . We had a lot of activities in the neighborhood when I was little.

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

We went to movies. We had the Tivoli on



Consaul Street (which is now the Knights of Columbus) and during the depression they gave away dishware—and I use the term loosely—it was inexpensive, you know, dinnerware. You'd get a dish each time you went and you completed the service, and that was our main entertainment till they closed. They also gave silverware.

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

Well, we went to dances and most of us didn't drive. It was not common for anyone to drive then. We waited till we got a ride and then another ride back home from downtown. We had the Trianon Ballroom and Recreation. We took the streetcar.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

Certain lodges at the church would make up a dance, and so they would give a dance. And they used to have sodalities for young people to get together and entertain. We had a hall here. Mr. Strick owned the hall, and they had dances, so we went up there and danced. That was big fun. They had regular orchestras.

### **Elizabeth Borics**

Dating was not considered proper at that time until you were at least sixteen. You didn't have boyfriends or anything, and of course money was very scarce and you did very simple things. You could not afford to go to the show; you could not afford to go for a ride in the car because you couldn't afford to buy gasoline. It was a very trying time and you just had to stay home, more or less, and listen to the radio, that's all. We didn't have television. It was kind of rough, a dull sort of thing. The only way a person had of being together was to have a quiet evening together with the rest of the family.

### **John Hornyak**

On a date you would usually walk your date across the Ash-Consaul bridge and walk to Riverside Park and stop and buy popcorn and ice cream

off the popcorn man on Summit Street. We'd go to the show—the Tivoli or the Palm Theatre in Birmingham—or go downtown to the show.

### **William Pasztor**

When we were young, what we would do is go to a dance and everybody knew everyone else; if not they knew your brother or your sister or somebody. So, you walked up to them and real politely you asked them to dance. The boys would ask to dance and as you danced then you make your pitch to take in a movie the following Sunday, or Saturday, or what have you. But, as far as getting introductions, everybody knew everybody else 'cause generally all of us lived in the neighborhood ever since we were children.

### **Mary Lenkay**

Tiedtke's was really a gathering place for the women that was working. We'd say, "Well, meet you at Tiedtke's," or if they went shopping, "Meet you at Tiedtke's." They had a real good root beer, Tiedtke's—a great big bottle for a nickel, and it was delicious root beer. So, everybody went and had not a bottle but a jug of root beer. And, they had the best baked stuff that you want to see. They had that Tiedtke's "special," they used to call it. It was really a special.

### **Margaret Brezvai**

They went to "doings"; like they would have people come in, play cards, get together or if there were any "doings" at the church they would go there. But they went different places. They went to neighbors, visited a lot more and did things like that.

### **William Szabo**

The church pulled people together, then the saloons were gathering places, and Collins Park was the other thing in the summer. Collins Park, they called it the *kiserdo*. *Kis* means "little," *erdo* means the "small woods." . . . There were saloons, and there was Strick's—the Playdium. Then there was

Gaspar's, Monoky's and I'm sure I'm overlooking some of them. You see, all the guys would go to their favorite saloon and you would meet a friend and he would say, "Where can I meet you?" "Well, come over to so and so's place." "So why don't you come over to where I go?" They were in a sense social gathering places for these hard-working men, and I'll tell you something. I used to wonder myself as a youngster, is this the limit of the intellectual needs of these people--to just work, go to church, and then go to the saloon? It seems to me as I look back on it—and viewed in their life style and their training—going to the saloon was okay because the animal-type work that they were involved in.

### **Mary Garand**

There was a sort of poolroom on Genesee Street where all the young people gathered. It was like a club house; I think it was called Gerard's. All the men gathered to play cards or pool. It was just like today. They have these places for young people. There was no drinks served there or nothing like that; it was just like maybe they sold candy.

### **Frank Nagy**

Also, reminiscing, we can go back to the days when we watched the Italians down on York Street. I watched bocci ball being played in the back of Cipriani's. Mama Cipriani ran a pizza parlor before pizzas were popular. Bocci ball is an Italian game similar to bowling, played with balls—round balls, that men toss or women toss, a game like bowling without pins.

### **Velma Jambor Lengel**

They had a lot of "doings," though, at the church. We had bazaars, dances; but I remember we used to have picnics every year in the yard and later on it got to a festival and now it's all considered a festival, including the other neighborhood churches.

## **William Pasztor**

Every church had their societies—their Acting Society and their Sick Benefit Society and the Dramatic Society. Almost every church had their dramatic society, to put on plays. At one time, our church, St. Michael's, would put on a play—a three-act play—once a month, and it was held in the Hungarian Reformed Church auditorium. They had some very fine actors but I was known as a bad actor. Some of them were musical plays and some of them were heavy drama; and some of them were comical.

There was always something going on around the church, whether it was a meeting, or just take a hike, or have a picnic in the summer. They used to have picnics in the back yard of the churches and ice cream socials.

They always had special dances for different seasons, or different times—all except during the holy days, of course; they didn't have any then. But in summer they had anniversary dances and down on the corner of Moravan and Valentine they had a hall called Sokol Hall. And, during the forties and the late thirties, up until World War II, they had a dance almost every Saturday night—American dance almost every Saturday. That was a big thing for the young people to get together and meet one another and dance and enjoy themselves. There was always a picnic going on in the church yard either at Hungarian Reformed, St. Michael's or St. Stephen's, or at Holy Rosary. There was always some place to go for a festival or a dance.

## **Priscilla Taylor**

We also danced in the streets. . . . About once a month they'd block off the street and we'd have a little orchestra and we'd dance in the street.

## **Frank Drlik**

We had . . . an organization there called the Saint Cyril and Methodius. They were two missionaries that helped, hundreds of years ago, to spread

the Catholic religion in Czechoslovakia, you know. And so they continued that over here and called it the Saint Cyril and Methodius Society. In those days because of the different types of living conditions everything was a society because that's all the people had . . . where they could mingle socially. . . . They had their dances and their parties and their activities, and so you kept busy with social doings. They had social functions of all kinds and the Saint Cyril and Methodius Society and the Sokols would meet and work together on great big meets, too.

### **Joseph "Fudgie" Wlodarz**

They started (the Hungarian Club) quite a few years back. Most of our people at one time were [of] Hungarian descent. They wanted to show them that they were friendly and try to work together, run things that were of emphasis not only to the Hungarians but the neighborhood itself. That is the reason the Hungarian Club started.

### **Mike Dandar**

The May Coal Club got its start from the May Coal Company that was situated on Bakewell Street, right by the railroad track across from Birmingham School. . . . Mr. Trudeau was the owner of May Coal. He always did like sports and the kids in the neighborhood. He saw that some evenings they had nowhere to go and they were too young to go to the taverns. In fact even in the bowling alleys you had to be of drinking age to get in the bowling alleys that were in the neighborhood. So he told them to clean up the building and they could use it for sports, to do gymnastics. Many of the fellas, that's how they got their start in gymnastics and boxing. They used to have card tournaments; in fact I think they even had a pool table from somewhere. Mr. Trudeau was very good to the fellas in the neighborhood. He sponsored baseball teams, softball teams and almost any kind of sport that you could think of that was around in those days, and he backed them both in uniforms—if nothing else a T-shirt and a cap,

which was quite a thing in those days, to play with a ball team that had a T-shirt and cap.

### **William Pasztor**

We had quite a few organizations. One of the organizations they had was the May Coal Club, which was on the corner of Craig and Bakewell. At one time it was a coal yard and they had horses in this particular building and they used to haul the coal. Mr. Trudeau, who owned the May Coal Company, let the fellows from the neighborhood set up a club. They went in and cleaned up and set up a boxing ring and a few other things and they called themselves the May Coal Club. They organized softball teams and baseball teams and boxers and horseshoe throwers and a few other things we played in there.

They also had about five different baseball teams when I was younger, which were backed by different merchants. And they had a football team called the Birmingham Boosters and another one called the Birmingham Ads, and they played in the same league and the same weight division. And they were the cream of the football players in this neighborhood. And they had maybe five other football teams, but they were the forerunners.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

At one time, May Coal Club had the Birmingham team—they had softball—and they won the national championship.

### **Louis Kovacs**

You know, one time we had a May Coal Club here . . . and in this here club they had, this is what you call the real Americans. They had Italians, they had Slovaks, they had Hungarians and in this here club at that particular time they didn't have what you'd call a trainer, or a guy that managed you, and like that. They organized and voted for people to run the club. And they played pool in there; they played checkers and they played cards and they had boxing

and wrestling; and at one time they had every boxing champion in the city from the May Coal Club. But they weren't all Hungarians. . . . Stanley Zak and Joe Zak were out of there, and Farkas was heavy-weight boxing champion, and there was just a lot of good things over there in Birmingham that held that neighborhood together a lot. They're not trying to be better than the other one, you know. They didn't care where they came from; they were "Joe" and "John" and that was it. They didn't care if their dad was a superintendent or principal or just another person, you know.

### **Priscilla Taylor**

There's the place called the May Coal Company and the men used to play baseball and softball, and most of the time they played in Birmingham School's parking lot, and we used to watch them every week. The May Coal men also sponsored boxing affairs every so often, and there's a couple of famous boxers that came from our end of the country. [We] used to sit around and watch them and they boxed; they circled off a section of the streets and there would be lots of people that put up chairs and watched them box for several hours.

### **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

They built an elevated platform for the boxing match that was on Bakewell Street, near the corner of Paine Avenue. The street was closed to automobile traffic. After the boxing match there would be dancing and other forms of entertainment, exhibiting the talents of the neighborhood— also outside performers, sort of a small Birmingham ethnic festival.

### **Mike Dandar**

I was probably only eight or ten years old, so I wasn't in the matches myself, but I can remember going down there in the evenings and watching those fellas box. We had a fella lived across the street, John Hornyak, lived on Magyar Street. He

was one of those fellas who was boxing. I don't believe they had Golden Gloves at that time. There was fellas, name of Babu Horvath, George Kerekes, Alex Cervený, fella by the name of Steve Shea. Steve went on to become the lightweight champ of the city of Toledo.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

Joe Packo, he was a boxer; he made quite a name, a Hungarian boxer. And we had a fella by the name of Lou Takacs; he made himself into quite a boxer.

### **John Bistayi**

As far as I can recall, I know we had a gymnasium on Consaul and Front Streets. How much of it was used for boxing I don't know. The Slovaks had their gym. . . . Now, for boxing itself, I think most of the boxing that was done on the East Side was done on the corner of Front and Main in the gym in the old Murphy Building, the third floor. I remember going up there when I was a little boy . . . seven, eight, ten, twelve years old and watching the boxers, what would you say, train. That I can remember, but I can't remember any of that in Birmingham itself between Consaul and York.

### **Joseph "Fudgie" Wlodarz**

In the sixth grade we already had softball and basketball teams. And later on, when the Blade Leagues came in, we had baseball too. We formed a league, including the other schools in East Toledo, and we played each other. . . .

I played and coached three generations—over three thousand kids and grownups—[and] have a ballfield named after me, a lighted one, on [the] East Side. I was put in Central's Hall of Fame in 1985 . . . in Birmingham's, and honored in Ohio's.

### **Louis Kovacs**

Years ago they had a baseball team—like they had the Senators, the Yankees, and all them



teams. Our neighborhood was the Senators; we had people on our team in the Hall of Fame. . . . Softball—we've got a lot of good ballplayers. Sosko [was an] outstanding pitcher over here in Birmingham.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

They had a Birmingham league of indoor softball teams playing for Birmingham. Every Sunday you'd have three, four teams from the league competing with each other, and one year the Kinsey Funeral Home was in the league and we won the championship. There was a lot of football on Birmingham field.

### **Louis Kovacs**

There was the whole football team there. Icky Horvath used to play on that. Francis Lengel and Henna Lengel and Frank and Julius Kiss, and they were all on that—the old Booster—and also the Birmingham Ads was another one. Then they had Vargo Coal come into the picture there afterwards and they played. Vargo Coal was one of the teams, and I forgot who the other team was, but they played until one won the championship and Vargo Coal lost to, I think it was, the Birmingham Ads. One of the good ballplayers over there was Andy Farkas; he was a professional, you know. He broke Sammy Baugh's record by completing the longest pass in pro ball.

. . . I remember Vargo—he was a good ballplayer—and Toth went to Northwestern where he had the longest kick in the Big Ten—[and] Irvin. They were all good football players, real good football players. They were outstanding. Most of them played down at Waite. . . . Gregus [was] by all means the greatest running back in the U.S.; he played for Waite and Wake Forest.

### **William Szabo**

These people that grew up—my generation that grew up here—they grew up under very tough circumstances and the young men in the upper teens in those days were really men—I mean hard as

nails—and consequently they spawned athletes there. They are still talking about the old teams, the Birmingham Boosters and the Birmingham Ads, and they used to play people or teams from Canton. I think they played the Canton Bulldogs, which, I think became the Cleveland Browns, if I have it correct. And then there was a Detroit team and then another neighborhood team the Eagle AC's, I think from [the] West End or someplace on the other side of town that they used to play. Anyway, these young men under good coaching would have reached national prominence. In fact one of the Toth boys went to Northwestern and became All-American there, and he was just a little guy and tough, real tough. There was great competition—neighborhood competitions, you know—between Waite High School and Libbey and Scott, and the rest of the town looked down on these guys. They were of peasant origin and these guys liked nothing better than to grind those others in the dust.

### **Louis Kovacs**

Monoky, he was an outstanding bowler and another guy was Sendi; he bowled a couple three-hundred games. Monoky, I guess he had a three-hundred game. . . . We had terrific bowlers. I could name you quite a few. They were the best bowlers in the city of Toledo, you know. Duke and Ace Nagy . . . and Paul Zam and Rip Tinta were outstanding bowlers. I mean they were all over two hundred average bowlers. . . .

Komives, he used to play down at Bowling Green University and he was an outstanding basketball player, outstanding. In fact he was probably one of the best players in the United States. In fact I think if he wasn't an All-American he was pretty near an All-American.

### **Frank Drlik**

The Sokols started, I would say, back by possibly 1909, or something like that, 1910. It's called, you know, the Sokol Organization, is what

the name of it is. They had these activities in Europe, too, and so they were more or less brought along here by the people that migrated here to America, because they believed in having physical exercise and so forth and cultural and social activities together.

My dad did perform with some of the fellas that came from Europe that . . . formed these Sokols and he did participate in the gymnastics and all the activities that the Sokols had. See, these people came from Czechoslovakia and they couldn't talk English and they didn't know anybody here, so the smartest thing they could do was to stick together; you know, the same ones that could talk together and talk about their experiences and have entertainment and the stuff that they had. . . . In those days that was their central hub, the organization where they all came together to meet and they were happy to see each other and, you know, talk about their common experiences here and how they learned to talk English here and got jobs and all that stuff.

There used to be a Red Sokol . . . they were non-Catholics, see, they belonged at Sokol Hall on Valentine Street is where they always met. . . . That was not a church, that was just a place to get together and socialize. The Blue Sokols were the Catholics. . . . We had our activities at Holy Rosary Church. This Blue Sokol . . . was locally organized by Czechoslovakian men who were prominent and leaders in the associations. Some of these men were my uncle—his name was Joseph Drlik—and a Bohemian by the name of Steve Polesovsky, who was very active and helped organize. And then . . . John Reisner, George Zak, Mike Botek [were] very active.

. . . . There was another fella named Carl Kosgis who was active in the organization, too. So there was local leaders who helped organize the club and of course stayed with as leadership and held the offices for years, you know, helping out with the work to be done.

The Red Sokol would possibly have more

[members] because there were more of them than there were of the Catholics. . . . We kinda didn't get along together too well at first because we were rivals, you know, but then as the years went by we learned to respect each other more and get along better. Then we started competing against each other. . . . We had a big weekend of activities, and then during that time we'd have competition between the Red Sokol and the Blue Sokol, and they were real good, too. Those Red Sokols were real good.

### **William Pasztor**

The other organization was the Sokol Hall, which was gymnastics, on the corner of Moravan and Valentine. And that was actually set up as a gym for the rings and the saddle, the crossbars, and they were gymnasts. They called themselves the Sokol, the Sokol Hall. The Sokol came from Czechoslovakia, where they have a lot of gymnasts, gymnastics, and that's what they did. That's why Sokol Hall was built.

### **Frank Drlik**

There was nothing else, no place, anything, except during recess hours. But they wanted to continue these activities, these people that came from Europe, from Czechoslovakia. And so our parents had us go maybe twice a week or so and we participated in exercise and gymnastics at the hall and also exercises on the parallel bars, the horizontal bars, the rings and the horse. We learned how to exercise on these and how to perform on these. Well, when we were kids we had more or less calisthenics for the small kids. As they grew older and then you got bigger, then you participated in the tougher exercises and then you also had, like you do nowadays, high jumping and broad jumping.

Then about once a year or so they'd have a meet. In Czechoslovakia it's called a *slet*, which means a "meet." They went to some city—Detroit or Cleveland or Chicago or San Antonio, Texas, or

some city—and they all congregated and they all participated, thousands of them, did the same types of exercises, you know, calisthenics. It was really pretty, down on a field someplace, and this was a great big meet that they had and there was a social gathering there, too. They had big dinners and dances for the people. A great big affair might last a week or maybe a weekend, at least. We also had these doings we'd participate in, what they'd call Czechoslovakian dances. They dressed in the costumes of Czechoslovakia. They are real pretty and colored.

Girl gymnasts . . . participated in gymnastic carnivals. They met at different places. They gymmed on this big bar they had, great big bar. They did tricks and sommersaults and all kinds of stuff off this bar.

Oh, and the thing I just thought I'd mention it—in the old days you didn't have (my parents didn't have) a car or anything like that to drive you there. We had to walk to the hall for our exercises, for our practices and things, which was about a mile, mile and a half, and walk home, too.

### **Joseph "Fudgie" Wlodarz**

They started (the Hungarian Club) quite a few years back. Most of our people at one time were [of] Hungarian descent. They wanted to show them that they were friendly and try to work together, run things that were of emphasis not only to the Hungarians but the neighborhood itself. That is the reason the Hungarian Club started.



### SECTION III NEIGHBORHOOD

#### **Frank Nagy**

It's my understanding through reading and talking with the old timers that Birmingham itself was in the very, very early days—prior to 1890—nothing but farmland. It was made up of three farms. We know the names because they are still in our community. There was the Collins farm (Collins Park is reminiscent of that), the Valentine farm (Valentine Street is still with us) and the Benedict farm. This was the nucleus of the community. It was prime land (it had been) before the farmland. Before the white settlers it was trading ground. We know where Duck Creek was. . . . That was a shortcut from the trading post. Peter Navarre had a trading post at the mouth of Duck Creek and he also had a trading post at what would now be the foot of Fassett Street.

The foot of Consaul Street is remarkable in that the first school in East Toledo was there, a one-room schoolhouse that even predates, I understand, Harriet Whitney's school which is now the main library site. This was attended mainly by French traders and the few Germans that were in the community and even the Indians that were still here at that time.

#### **William Szabo**

Malleable Casting, and then farther out Front Street the American Shipbuilding Company and the Interlake Iron—that concentration of industry brought many, many, many immigrants to the country and I guess these people would settle in colonies. There was a small colony of Slovak people at the northeastern end of Birmingham . . . and around Moravan Street, anyway up around York Street, and a small, very small Italian ethnic group.

#### **Helen Georgoff Munson**

When I was a child the houses all on York

Street belonged to Interlake Iron Company and people bought these houses very cheap and these houses were moved—I'll never forget as long as I live—on rollers to the spot where they were going to put a foundation and put the houses on. About the fifth house from where I live at the present used to belong to the Interlake Iron. Some of these houses on Front Street, most of them, were brought from Ironville, [when] people in Ironville folded up. The people had built their own homes and they had them dug out from the foundation and had them moved into Fremont Street, Norwalk Street, Wheeling Street.

### **Frank Nagy**

As these immigrants were coming in they were living in essentially company houses and these houses, many of them, are still much as they were in the 1890s.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

Those days, when you came over here an average man didn't have a hotel. Women would take in maybe four, five boarders and feed and lodge them in a bedroom. And as time went on, why, the fellas they got married. They bought themselves a house and established themselves, and Birmingham kept on growing and growing and growing.

### **Mary Mahler**

[Our house] was built in 1909, and when my parents, Anna and John Micenec, came from Lorain, Ohio, they lived further down on the street, here on Valentine, and then this house was for sale and my parents bought it in 1912. We've lived here all this time. When my mom and dad died, why, then my husband and I bought the home. This used to be nothing but farm land and we used to have a barn in the back. This was all muddy streets, wooden sidewalks, and picket fences. In the back yard we had a cow, chickens and geese [and] a big garden. . . . And we had a big shanty. Well it used to be a barn in the backyard and my mother let an old man



who had no place to sleep, sleep in there. And the neighbor had horses.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

We lived above the restaurant most of my growing-up time. I was sixteen when my young brother Tony was born in 1948. They built this house in 1950. I remember Tony was two years old when we moved here and I was eighteen. Most of my growing up was done at the restaurant and you were just kind of part of the business; when you walked downstairs you were in the restaurant, or the kitchen at least. Our life was the restaurant. There really wasn't a separation—you went upstairs to sleep, that was about it. There wasn't a big separation from the restaurant or the events that happened in there or whatever was going on.

### **Victoria Oravec**

I never left Toledo or Birmingham. My husband was from Birmingham, he was born and raised here, just the same as I was, and we just lived here. In fact I lived on Consaul Street since I am three years old. . . . After my dad died, my mother remarried and she built a big house next to this house (that's 2140), and so I got married from there and I lived here all my life on Consaul Street, right here. I moved from one corner to the other corner. From that corner I moved to that corner and from that corner I moved here.

### **Mike Dandar**

I was born October 24, 1921 in a house across the alley and about six houses down. When I was fourteen years old we moved across the street to 1861 Genesee. I got married after I got out of the service in 1946 and lived on Caledonia Street, where the bend is by Woodford Street—in a store building. We lived upstairs there for five years and then I built this house and we have lived here since 1953. . . . I've always lived in this neighborhood.

### **Frank Nagy**

The house my father lives in is the family homestead. The homestead was built, probably, shortly before 1906. My dad moved there shortly after he was born in 1907 and the house was relatively new even then. There were three houses that were built on speculation by a lumber dealer. They lived in one of the houses and when they were up for sale my father's father took the choice of the middle of the three houses. He took that house because it had a well and the well was in much better shape than the other house. There was no plumbing at all in the house; they had an outhouse that they built. They built a shed—they had a couple of sheds in the back for wood—and they also raised chickens. They had board fences around either side of the property over six feet tall. My father grew up essentially in that house and when his father passed away he and my mother purchased the house.

### **Mary Garand**

Well, we lived in an apartment on Consaul Street . . . where my mother settled when she got married. There were six families, mostly Hungarian, maybe one Slovak, who was a cousin of my mother's. We had a big, open front yard—no fence or anything around it—so we had a nice big yard to play in, both front and back. My aunt lived across the street from us—Aunt Lizzie and Uncle Joe.

### **Elmer Lucas**

I'm going on sixty-five, so except for a few years in World War II and the first two years of our married life, I've lived in Birmingham since I was born in 1920. In fact the street where we live now is just a block from where I was born on Burger Street.

We lived right above the grocery store. In fact, I spent probably fifteen, sixteen years there—living with three, four other families, there above the grocery store.

### **Margaret Brezvai**

Most of my childhood I lived . . . right here in the house I'm living in now. . . . When my mother died [my father] rented this home. When I married I bought it from him because it meant a lot to me. I wanted to own the home my father had built for my mother.

### **Ann Lucas**

In Birmingham . . . on the street where I am living today, when we first moved here about thirty years ago, there were several families who were related. There were aunts, uncles and cousins who lived just down the block. When I was a child I lived next door to my first cousin and I know that when we were children we were very close. My mother always knew where I was.

### **William Kertesz**

My own house I live in right now, I watched it being built in about 1937, as huge horses with scoops dug the basement. My house has over twenty oak beams in it that came from the railroad, from box cars. Of course much of the wood was used for heat; many of us had big parlor stoves. Thank goodness for the Wheeling and Lake Erie.

If you needed bricks they were also free for the taking. When the Maumee Malleable was closed and dismantled, [much] red clay brick and fire brick was left behind, and even now many patios and driveways remain in the area that were made with these bricks. I know I have some in my back yard. People seemed to be hauling brick from there for years.

Sand was also free. It was under the Ash-Consaul bridge and was used for making mortar or to put in our root cellars. People had root cellars. You put your parsley and carrots in for the winter, and I can remember many a winter day going out there to pick up parsley and carrots to put in soup. And if you grew cabbage you made your own sauerkraut. It was good with spareribs or sausage

or ham from the hog that was slaughtered last October. Almost everyone had a smokehouse; I know we did. If you didn't have one you used your neighbor's, but almost everyone had an attic, and hanging in the attic was sausage, ham, ribs and bacon.

### **Helen Georgoff Munson**

My dad made a big wooden table and the people in the neighborhood all got together, they all pitched in and paid for this big pig. They made sausage, they cut their meats. My dad made a smoke house in the back yard and they used to smoke all their sausage, their pork or whatever they wanted to smoke. And up in the attic of this house, my dad had big racks and they used to hang the sausage up there to dry. My mother used to make lard; they made a soap with it and we did all our cooking with lard.

And then another thing that I did love when I was a child—my dad made root beer for us children. And my dad did cook wine like everybody else did, and my sister and I used to have to stand and dance around in the grapes. We had to wash our feet. And from part of the juice my mother made jam. They made wine and they used to make our own sauerkraut.

### **Mary Mahler**

A lot of fruits and vegetables came from [the markets] but they also had big gardens. Then they would buy their own hogs, render their own lard, . . . cut up the meat, put it upstairs in big tubs. So it would not spoil. Mom put salt or something on the meat during the winter. They would buy, if they had the money, . . . a half hog or a whole hog and make cracklings and then they made crackling biscuits out of it. And they ate a lot of soups 'cause the men worked hard at the Interlake and the shipyards and all over and they wanted soup 'cause it was warm. They had roast beef, stews, goulashes and . . . my mother made her own bread and noodles.

**Mary Lenkay**

We didn't have electricity until after I was married. We had coal lamps on the wall and that was my job when I came home from school: fill up the lamps with kerosene and clean the chimneys, take out the ashes. We didn't have electricity. . . . We just had coal stoves. We didn't have gas either because the gas lines weren't in yet.

**J. Oscar Kinsey**

In those days, too, you had to pump the water in the kitchen, you just didn't turn it on. . . . Then sometimes you want a good cold drink of water—right on Front and Consaul they had an outside pump. You pump it and you get some cold water.

**Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

I can also remember when we had outhouses. Many people didn't have toilets in their houses. On Halloween the boys used to have fun dumping the outhouses. If someone was in it, it was a catastrophe!

**John Bistayi**

It became a whole new situation after World War II. Up to that time Birmingham was a little Hungarian village. Heck, I spoke Hungarian as much as American or English due to the fact that there were enough people around, including my own family, where you had an opportunity to practice your Hungarian. Today I have very, very little opportunity to practice my Hungarian. So, from 1928—I use that as my high school freshman year—there were probably twelve thousand people in Birmingham that were strictly Hungarian, a couple hundred Italian families. I know there were a half dozen Romanian families and there were quite a few Czechs, but I couldn't tell you the amount. In those days, in 1928, there were only ten cars in Birmingham—I could just about remember everyone that had a car—ten, eleven, at the most.

### **Agnes Gadus McDaniel**

My mother and dad had eight children but two of them died when they were little. The little girl died of diptheria because at the time preventive measures were not yet developed, as far as I know. All the children were delivered at home by a midwife named Mrs. Mikola. She came by for a whole week after the baby was born and gave the baby a bath and washed its diapers and clothes in the same water. Of course, at that time, water was heated on a coal stove. The mother usually stayed in bed for a whole week and the godmother was expected to bring a basket of food, including chicken soup and roast chicken to the family. Among other things, our godmother always brought unusual delicacies, such as cream puffs and french pastries filled with cream and custard.

### **William Kertesz**

Most of us children were delivered by Mrs. Mikola. She was a midwife who lived in the neighborhood, and she delivered many children in the area—as the old-type birth certificates will show.

### **Mary Lenkay**

Mrs. Kovacs, she lived next to my sister on Genesee. She was a midwife and delivered children. . . . There was another midwife, two of them. . . . I've never been to the hospital. Every one of my children, they were all born at home. We had the doctors come out to the house when it was time. I had a midwife too, for a couple of them but then after that I called the doctor for the rest. . . . People didn't have money to go to the hospital.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

We had eight children in the family. We never asked for nothing from nobody. We never went in debt. We were raised the hard way and we ate what they put on the table . . . 'cause there was nothing else to eat. So, we were raised up the hard way. We

respected our parents. . . .

My daddy didn't write but my ma did write in Hungarian. She also read and she knew what was going on because she read the Hungarian papers. She also read, she could read American. She learned to talk in American because she'd been shopping; she went to the store. She did very good. She didn't have any education; what she learned, she learned herself by talking to people.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

In Birmingham in those days most of the people spoke Hungarian, Slovak, Italian, or whatever nationality you were. On any given Sunday, you could walk down Birmingham and everybody would be out on the porch. . . . There was a closeness and friendliness with the people because you didn't have all the extracurricular to draw attention away from your association with the people in the neighborhood. It was wonderful.

You could walk down Birmingham any Sunday noon and you could go by one house and you could smell the chicken *paprikash* and by the time you got to the next house you could smell the soup, by the time you got to the next house maybe it was breaded chicken or pork chops. . . . Nobody had too much money. We survived on what little we had and if you didn't have money to buy meat we'd make some potato soup and bread—that would fill you up.

I liked the slow pace, the friendliness, the atmosphere. Everybody was so friendly, so beautiful. It was a beautiful life here. There was a lot of beautiful people in Birmingham. We all loved each other, they understood each other. . . . We had three black families that lived on Consaul Street in an apartment and they were the nicest people. They could even speak Hungarian and they got along wonderfully. There was no discrimination or anything like that because we all respected each other. [We had] great admiration for each other, great love for each other. We loved each other like it should be.

You could walk down Birmingham on a Sun-

day afternoon [and] if you had to go to the bathroom you could go into any house, even if nobody's home, and use their bathroom and walk out. They never locked the doors.

Years ago you could . . . look out the window and there was maybe your neighbor leading a cow out to the field, to the pasture. And then at night they'd bring them back to the stall for the night. People had horses, horse and buggies that would go by. They had the horse and the cow—the cow for milk for the children. In the morning they would go out and milk the cow. And, of course, they had dogs.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

People had horses, we had chickens, we had cows. People wanted to raise stuff [and] they did until the Health Department didn't allow it. I had chickens over here, rabbits, pigeons; we had all that.

### **Mary Lenkay**

There were all these guys that would get on a train, you know, just to get a ride and then they jumped off. They came to the houses and knocked on the door and asked, "Could I have something to eat?" We always gave them some hot coffee or whatever we had. At least a couple slices of bread if we didn't have anything else. In those days they didn't have the bread sliced so my mother used to slice it in great big thick slices, and they ate it and then they took off and they never bothered us.

### **Victoria Oravec**

In those days people were friendly. We never locked our doors, it was always open. Nobody was afraid.

### **Ann Lucas**

The neighborhoods were more or less self contained. You didn't have to go out of your neighborhood to buy a dress, to shop for groceries, or to go to a dance or bowling or to a theatre. Our neighborhood had all those things right here. . . . It



made for a much more vital, personal involvement in the lifestyle of our neighborhood.

### **Mary Lenkay**

When I was a young girl I had to go to [the] store every day because nobody had frigidaire; it wasn't invented. We had [an] ice box but then if it was too hot the ice would melt and your food would spoil. About every second street had a meat store, butcher shop. So we just ran out to the butcher shop every day and got our supply—especially milk and meat, because you can't keep that. So we just bought what we ate up that day.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

Those days we didn't have the ice boxes, and the women would go Sunday morning to the grocery store. We had twenty grocery stores, and they would buy the meat for Sunday and the women would cook the soup for dinner; and for supper maybe we'd have roast chicken, breaded pork chops or breaded chicken. We always cooked two meals on Sunday. You could go up to any grocery store—nine o'clock they were opened—and the women lined up to buy the meat.

In those days if you went to the grocery store it was two blocks and you walked. . . . It was a slow pace, you just went along and enjoyed life, enjoyed everyone's friendliness. It was the closeness of a lot of people.

### **William Kertesz**

There were many groceries in the neighborhood, all "ma and pa" stores. Meyer's, Kovac's, Farkas', Ellinger's, Pallinger's, Bert Berg's, Dombrady's, Csorba's and John Toth's (his Kroger store), and there was an Orosz on Genesee Street and one on Consaul Street and Juhasz's on Front. (I know I missed a few.) They didn't all get rich but it was a living.

All these groceries had crates and live chickens in front of their stores and they waited on you.

You wanted a chicken, they'd go out there and pick it out for you; and it was live and you took it home and killed it yourself. I just couldn't watch my mother kill a chicken, but the soup and homemade noodles were great!

### **Mary Garand**

Kiss and Orosz had a grocery store; both of them were right next door to us, one on this side of the street and one on the other. So, we would take turns and give them both business. We knew them both: Mrs. Orosz and Mrs. Snyir (she got married a second time). So, then I would go get my mother some soup meat and whatever I would buy from her. My mother would send me and she'd take a smell, and she'd say, "Take this back—it smells bad." I had to take it back and get something else. I used to hate that. My mother smelled everything. If it didn't smell good, she didn't want it.

[The bakery] was very famous. We had two bakeries there, one right near the pool room and one not far from there on the other side of the street, on the corner of Genesee and Whittemore. [We went there] every day for bread. They had good bread even then. A Mr. Toth was very popular there. He ran the bakery.

### **Mary Lenkay**

The ice man came twice a week—the milk man, baker man, even Tiedtke's. They brought things from downtown Tiedtke's on horse and sometimes it was nine or ten o'clock when they brought the order out because they had so many orders.

[The rag man] came to pick up any rags and bones and what not. He blew the horn and everybody said, "Oh, that's the sheeny; let's see what we have for him." . . . We got five, six cents and could get an ice cream for that.

### **Elmer Lucas**

Peddllars, yes, there were all kinds. They sold fruit and vegetables when they were in season. You

had a bakery [and] horse-drawn bakery carts. They would come around delivering bread, selling bread, usually twice a day. You would have milk, with horse delivery. You had people that would pick up rags, bottles, cans, glass—a junk peddler. As youngsters we would pick up whatever we could get because that was a little way to make extra money—not extra money, I mean the only money possibly that children did receive. In that period, especially in the depression, a penny bought quite a bit.

### **William Szabo**

[The] Italian people were in good weather the “hucksters.” They had the vegetable wagons and they supplied poultry. The farmers from just out of town here (just east of Birmingham), those days they’d come in with the crates of chickens [and] eggs, and the women would come out in the streets and reach in the crates and pick out a screeching chicken. . . . If it was fleshy or a good, heavy one, it would make good soup. They’d buy their chickens live and butcher them in the back yard there.

### **Anna Pocse**

We used to call them “hucksters.” They used to come around years ago. First they used to have horses, and wagons drawn with horses. They’d come around selling fruits and vegetables on their wagons. Later they used to come around driving trucks. They used to stop every so often and the people—or the ladies, most generally—would come out and buy the fresh vegetables from them—like oranges and apples and carrots and potatoes, onions. A lot of people would buy their fresh vegetables from a huckster, and he’d sell it for pretty reasonable prices.

### **William Kertesz**

We all remember Popcorn Joe. He came around the neighborhood with his little pushcart, selling popcorn for three cents a bag or a nickel a bag; a nickel was a big bag. Nice little, short, Italian

guy. And Mr. Jacob who delivered bread with his horse and wagon.

### **John Hornyak**

The old neighborhood? It was like fellas used to shoot dice on the corners and visit the pool rooms. There were all kind of saloons and grocery stores about on every corner.

There was Orosz on Genesee Street, Mr. Juhasz on Consaul and Magyar and then Mr. Snyir on Burger and Consaul. On Consaul there was Kiss—Mr. Kiss had a grocery store there—and Rihacek's Saloon, and there was a saloon on Caledonia and Consaul down by Juhasz's; Mr. Virag on Consaul Street, Mr. Ando on Caledonia by Whittemore and Mr. Monoky on Whittemore Street, Mr. Gribo on Valentine. Then I think there was a Mr. Gaspar on Bakewell and Whittemore, and there was a bakery shop, Mr. Toth, on Whittemore and Genesee. And they had more saloons on Paine Avenue but I can't think of all the names, and there were all kinds on Front Street. Mr. Vogel and Mr. Nagy and Mrs. Kohany had a saloon on Front, and then she moved to York and Front, and I can't think when that was. And there was a Mr. Csorba had a grocery store on Genesee off of York, and there is quite a few more but I can't think of all their names.

### **William Szabo**

There was on the corner of Whittemore and Genesee Streets the equivalent of a justice of the peace, J. P. Simon, and he was the man that arranged the tickets (boat tickets) for the people that were yet to come from Europe. The guy that was already here, he would give J. P. the money for the ticket and J. P. Simon would buy the ticket so his son or his wife could follow him to this country, and he'd make all kinds of legal arrangements. He was a jack-of-all-trades, a real nice guy—but what did they call him in Hungarian? I think I heard somebody say that it is like a recorder in Europe; and he got here and he saw an opportunity to broker all

these tickets, passage for these guys that wanted to come through.

### **Frank Nagy**

Dr. [Geza] Farkas I remember parading the neighborhood, always with his walking stick, his boutonniere, his spats, morning clothes and frock coat, and doffing his hat to all the ladies, whether they be old ladies or young ladies. He always had a smile and a friendly greeting. Dr. Farkas wrote the newspaper in Birmingham, *The Toledo*. The exploits of the Hungarian culture we learned through those pages. I studied my Hungarian through that newspaper. . . . [Dr. Farkas] attended every swearing-in service for the Immigration Service for a long time. He was known throughout the courts and honored in many respects.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

On my block we had lots of businesses. We had undertakers here, barber shops, taverns, butcher shops, bakery and a shopping store. Mrs. Kolibar and the Jewish family, Goldner's, they used to be on the corner that was neighborhood merchants. The men used to go get the beer in buckets. That's how they used to sell the beer, in buckets. When the man came home from work, the lady or some of the children would go get the bucket and beer. They had it in barrels.

### **Mary Bence**

Down on Genesee, in the twenty hundred block—that's between Whittemore and Bogar, you know, how shall I say it—the second store off Whittemore, that used to be a dry goods store by the name of Kolibar's. If you go down there you can see the name right on top and right in the entrance way. The name is there; and what they did, they sold all types of clothing that anyone would wear—men, women, children. They had shoes, they had underwear, they had overcoats, they had everything. It was known as a dry goods store and that way the

parents wouldn't have to go downtown to do their shopping. They didn't know how to speak too well in English so they went to the local merchants who were Hungarian. They knew how to talk in Hungarian, so they went there. And a couple of doors away from the bakery, on Whittemore [there] used to be a jewelry store. The man and woman over there would sell all types of jewelry, watches, rings, rosaries. They had Hungarian records, they had a victrola, they even sold victrolas. You had to be this high up [chest high] and then you put the records on one at a time and turn it over to hear whatever you wanted to hear.

Reeds was not a drug store—it was a variety store—because they could not sell medicine. The only thing they could sell was sundaes, sodas. They had a novelty store. When I first started going to the drug store we used to go get a sundae or a soda. You sat down to the table and then you would order your sundae and sit there and have it—soda with the double straw.

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

We used to have a lot of “ma and pa” stores—you know, husband and wife. . . . We had a dry goods store, a couple of them, Goldner's and Kolibar's—Kolibar, on Genesee—and then it was a toy store. The building is still there. Then we had a dry food store. On the next block there was a doctor there, Dr. Winter, and then Goldner's Dry Goods was up on Genesee Street, one Joe Nagy across from Kolibar's, and in the same block there was Dan Marozan and his son, shoe repairmen.

### **William Kertesz**

Kolibars and Fejes . . . both ran dry goods stores within a stone's throw of each other and they seemed to make out. And, the Chicago Bargain House, on Front Street, Goldner's; and everybody remembers that building with the big, black pig on the side of it. Fabos Dry Goods Store seemed to hold out the longest.

### **Mary Bence**

When I was [a] little schoolager they still had streetcars on Front Street and the streetcar would go downtown. When they started paving Front Street so it was not rough cobble road, they had a bus and the bus would . . . turn round and go back, way out to Ironville to the end of Front.

They had a ship built in the shipyard; they was having the launching and at the same time they had a parade on Front Street opening Front Street for the buses. By that time the streets were paved.

### **Joseph "Fudgie" Wlodarz**

At one time we used to have streetcars on Front Street, and the operation of them was as good as you could get, and they really took care of them. Then when they took the streetcars out, they brought the buses in. And I remember that I even worked for the Community Traction when they first put in the first trackless trolley bus. The tracks were gone but the bus would run by a trackless trolley up above. But only in a couple of big streets did they have that; then they discontinued that too.

### **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

I can remember the old wooden sidewalks in the neighborhood; when they were wet, they were very slippery. I can also remember when they paved many of the streets here in Birmingham. When Whittemore Street was paved it was the smoothest street in the neighborhood and they used to close one or two blocks occasionally so we could rollerskate on it.

### **William Szabo**

I can remember that when I was a little boy, on a Sunday morning the women would be out real early sweeping the sidewalks off and gathering up the rubble, tidying up the community. They would even take buckets and slosh off the sidewalks and sweep them off, and they wanted not only the inside of the house clean and nice but even outside.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

Years ago a woman would go to church on Sunday and you'd have to be careful because you walked on wooden sidewalks [and] somebody might be coming by in a horse and buggy and would get you full of water. You had to step back so you didn't get splashed. . . . I remember Caledonia Street was just a dirt road; Woodford Street was a dirt road. You'd go with a car, a Model T Ford, and you'd hope you don't get caught in the mud.

### **Elmer Lucas**

Burger Street at the time was unimproved ditches along the side. I remember because after rains there in the summer we would float sticks down along the street in front of the houses.

### **William Szabo**

My dad owned that [Packo's] when it was a saloon. Right out on the Consaul Street side of their building and near the corner was a concrete fountain about ten feet long and maybe four feet wide, and they had water bubbling up there into a pipe. And the purpose of that was that that's where the people could water their horses. I used to sit on the edge of that trough and dangle my feet in it and play there as a little boy. And when I go there now I say to my wife, "That's where I used to dangle my feet in the horse trough."

### **Velma Jambor Lengel**

We had the Ash-Consaul bridge . . . the old iron bridge that used to be rickety rack [and] half of the time it didn't close. It was funny. I remember Monsignor got caught on it once [when] it was open. You know, it opened—not a draw bridge, like a railroad bridge, it turns—and he got on it and they couldn't close it. He had to sit there and wait for it till they closed it up. I don't know how long it took. It was funny.



### **William Kertesz**

I used to drive a fire truck into the Birmingham neighborhood with Captain Andy Rakay, who also lived here. I had a hard time keeping my hands on the wheel; I had to wave to all my friends. A walk to the hardware store or bakery could take an hour for only three blocks. . . . I had to stop a few minutes to say hello to Alex and Steve and Joe, etc.

### **Alberta Traylor**

When I was a teenager, I don't know what it is, we had a different type of Hungarian people in the neighborhood. They worked like my dad, like my parents did, and they were very good neighbors; they did not bother you. I remember my mother became ill—my mother was ill after giving birth to one of my brothers, I don't know which one—and they [the neighbors] would bake. They would bake goods, and if they didn't bring it over they would send the baked goods to your home by the husband or by some of the children. They don't do it anymore, but the old Hungarian people used to do it years ago.

## **RITUALS**

### **Mike Dandar**

Baptisms, in our family are get-togethers, family get-togethers. They invite the families after the baptisms. The baptisms usually take place after the ten o'clock Mass, and usually around ten o'clock people would start gathering—the families or the people who were invited. Baptisms as a rule usually weren't a big affair. Usually the youngsters were baptized, I would say, at two or three weeks from the time they were born. If you want to talk here about my baptism, for some reason or another I was baptized the day after I was born. My mother delivered me at home on Magyar Street. I don't know why, except my mother thinks someone took a look at me and decided I wasn't going to live very long, so

they took me to the church. I was born on a Saturday and they took me to the church on Sunday.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

When we were born I know that right away they appointed the godparents. They had to go to church and they would baptize in a week or a couple weeks.

### **Alberta Traylor**

I belong to a Baptist church and when I had my children—when they were about six weeks old—I would take them to church and the minister would bless them, bless my children, and then from the age of eight on . . . you have to unite with the church and be baptized. . . . If you wanted to work in the church and you wanted to give your life to Jesus then we have a special ceremony. We tell our minister that and then you would be baptized. See, they have a special ceremony for that. . . . They have a special Sunday that you, the children and adults, are baptized. You are submerged under water and are brought up.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

The priest baptized the baby on a Sunday after Mass, after twelve o'clock Mass, and maybe he had three or four baptisms. After the baptism each one goes their own way, and they have an open house and the priest and all the friends gather and celebrate the joy of a new baby being baptized into their religion, whether it's Catholic or whatever.

### **Victoria Oravec**

They always had a nice party at the house for each baptism and then in those days, well, your neighbor or part of the family would bring in the food so the mother who had the child never had to cook. She didn't have to cook until she was able to get around to take care of the baby.

## **Helen Georgoff Munson**

In Birmingham the colored people used to baptize their children in the good old Maumee River. They used to take their children down. . . . My mother and father took my sister and I down and we used to watch them baptize the children in the Maumee River.

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## **William Pasztor**

After you took your fiance, or your girlfriend as she was called, to several dances and movies and so on and you felt that you wanted to walk through life with that particular girl you would ask her to be your wife, and if she consented, the following Sunday or Saturday you would go over and ask the parents' permission to marry their daughter. Sometimes the engagements lasted quite a while till "the old man" thought it over and he would start checking you out to see if your habits were correct or not. What were your intentions—you were under scrutiny from the minute you asked for the girl's hand in marriage. It if wasn't the old man watching you, it was the other relatives that were keeping an eye out.

## **J. Oscar Kinsey**

In those days we were dashing. In those days girls dressed like girls. . . . We had great respect and admiration for anybody of the opposite sex.

In those days, you had to kneel down, and ask, "Will you marry me?" and you had to get the father's permission. We didn't send out invitations to come to the wedding. They had a few of the best men go around with a cane with a rose on the cane and they would go to the people and invite them to the wedding. No invitations at all; it was by personal invitation. In those days the Hungarians or the Americans would tell a girl, "I love you," but in Hungarian the language is so beautiful. In Hungarian, they would say to the girl, "*Szerelmes vagyok szep asszony magaba*"—"I am madly in love with

you, my beautiful lady." It was so wonderful. It is a beautiful language.

### **Wilma Thomas**

The ethnic people at that time were very clannish, and if you were Hungarian you were expected to marry a Hungarian girl or boy. If you crossed the river and got mixed up with the Polish people that wasn't too good, but of course a lot of people did marry Polish, Slovak and Italian people. But there was that clannishness that I felt to some extent when I came here because I was not Hungarian.

### **Ann Lucas**

In a neighborhood such as Birmingham where there are so many family ties and everyone more or less went to school with everyone else, there was a great deal of marriages here, people didn't go out of the neighborhood. You grew up and you married a Hungarian boy, maybe from just down the street, or a Slavish boy from down at the other end of the neighborhood.

### **Margaret Brezvai**

In the olden days they had two of the best men or so go from house to house and invite the people to the wedding, and the weddings would go on sometimes two days and the next day even after that. Yet if you had enough food they would invite more people and it would go on and they would celebrate.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

My mother told me this when we were in Hungary. I saw a fellow going by, all dressed up in a black suit with a tall hat on with ribbons coming down from the hat. He carried a staff with bells on it—kind of like a tambourine. They had ribbons on the staff. That's kind of what they had in Birmingham, too. He'd go on the porch and hit the staff on the floor and make these noises; then he would issue

the invitation. It was an announcement that was an invitation for the family to come to the wedding of these two people. And he'd go through the whole thing. If they were going, I think they gave him a long piece of ribbon and he'd tie it on the staff. That's how they'd know how many guests were coming—how many families—with all the ribbons that were given to him.

I never saw that happen here, but my mother did. If it was like every other custom; probably the man that did the calling was invited in for a drink. . . . He'd have five or six drinks and need the ribbons to remind him.

### **Ann Lucas**

I can remember in the old days that when you were betrothed you never had a party until the bans appeared in church for the first time. That's when you had a wedding shower—three weeks before your wedding. When you wanted to invite people to your wedding, you didn't send written invitations; you and your prospective bridegroom would go and personally invite people. You went to their homes and you extended the invitation. So when the wedding feast came, everyone was acquainted with the bride or the bridegroom. They were generally very big weddings, very robust, really almost neighborhood affairs.

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

The ushers would go from door to door with a cane with a ribbon on it— instead of sending invitations—and invite the people. I attended one wedding that was held outside. In those days the ushers would put on an embroidered Hungarian vest and sing a poem—recite poems to the bride and groom—and then some people would take a dish and put in a wooden spoon and hit for money for a dance with the bride. One twirl.

### **John Hornyak**

[Weddings] are just about the same. They

had the Hungarian band and you beat the pan to collect money for you and this and that.

### **William Szabo**

I guess they [weddings] were relatively wild affairs—lots of dancing, music, drinking.

### **Agnes Gadus McDaniel**

Weddings were not as large at that time, although some people did rent the church hall. It was customary among Slovak people to share the expenses of the wedding. The groom's family paid for the whiskey, beer and pop, and the bride's family paid for the food. There were no caterers, so the relatives and friends did all the cooking and baking. There were some customs that were brought over from Europe. One is the bridal dance and another is the custom of removing the bride's veil and tying a babushka, which is the square piece of material like a scarf, on the bride's head to signify that she is now a married woman.

### **William Pasztor**

Most of the marriages were performed before the eyes of God and before witnesses, and when you went in you were scrutinized and questioned by either the minister or the priest. They had to announce your marriage three weeks in a row. Every Sunday they would announce that so and so [was] going to marry so and so, and if anyone finds any objections please report to the parish house.

### **Mary Bence**

My mother told me that . . . the whole wedding would walk to church from Whittemore Street, to Caledonia, down on Consaul to the church, and then coming back it would be the same way. Then the weddings would be just like when my aunt got married. The wedding was in the yard next door. . . . So they just put a tent up, and that's where they had the wedding. They couldn't afford a hall.

### **Lucy Romano Hornyak**

You couldn't marry someone out of your religion at that time; that wasn't right, you couldn't do that. I think everybody, at least in my time, married who you really liked. The marriages weren't arranged like they were earlier. A lot of people, earlier, they just planned who they wanted their children to marry. We got to pick who we really wanted to marry.

### **Wilma Thomas**

During the time that [Monsignor Eordogh] was here, people could not be married on Saturday. They had to be married on Tuesday or not at all.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

We didn't get married on a Saturday because we had a priest here who wanted no commotion going on the next day. He made sure everybody was sober before they entered church. So, we had it on the weekdays—middle of the week, like Tuesday or Wednesday. The next day they had to go to work; the working people had to go to work. They made sure there was weddings in the middle of the week.

### **Joseph Szegedi**

When I first started playing weddings, weddings used to go sometimes three days. . . . I remember one time—this was in 1938, I was just a youngster then, not too old, nineteen years old—and we had a wedding in Muskegon. We went on Saturday morning and didn't get home till Wednesday. That wedding kept on going.

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### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

Years ago the bells would ring during odd hours of the day. It meant that in a certain way they would ring would mean that a lady died, and if they rang another way, a man died. It was a certain

amount of rings or some system. My grandmother always knew. "Oh, that must have been Mrs. so-and-so who wasn't feeling well." They would ring as soon as they found out that someone had died. They did that after the six o'clock bells, then they would announce that someone had died. If it rang in the afternoon or morning, you knew it was someone very important.

They used to have the body at home for about three days and somebody would stay up with the body over night. In my uncle's case I sort of remember some drinking going on during the night. They would get a little rambunctious. His buddies would sit up; you know, his friends would sit with the body over night, and all day long they would come by and visit as if it was a funeral home. It just took place in your own house.

### **Victoria Oravec**

In those days they covered their mirrors when anybody was laid out in the house. It was a tradition; they used to do that in Europe.

### **Velma Jambor Lengel**

The funeral director [had] nothing but an office at one time, and everybody had to be laid out at home. It sort of put a hardship on a family 'cause you had to sleep in the same room with the dead people and then you had to move your furniture out and that made it miserable. We stayed up all night with people. The wake was later. The wake was after the funeral. There was always two or four people sitting up all night, taking turns sitting up with the dead people so that the family could rest and go to bed. . . .

[After the funeral Mass] they would all come back to the house to have coffee and sandwiches and that was to thank them for taking off work . . . and driving their cars. Years ago they had to hire cars. You used to get cars from the funeral director and not very many people had cars so they had to rent the cars to go from the church to the cemetery.



## **Mary Bence**

Like today we had a funeral for a lady who was a member of our church. Now the women of the society all stand with lighted candle—that goes back to that time. The way they started it at that time we still continue. Then they had something that we do not do now. After the funeral was over, everybody came out and stood in front of the church. They opened the coffin, put all the flowers in front of the coffin, and all the people that were there were taken on a picture, as a remembrance.

## **J. Oscar Kinsey**

Traditionally the remains of the deceased were taken back to the person's home. I remember many instances in which we were forced to remove a window and window frame in order to get the casket into the house. Furniture was moved around, and sometimes out, to make room for visitation and viewing. Constant vigil was kept—round the clock—for two days by family and close friends. Food, which was plentiful, was provided by the family.

On the day of the funeral the deceased was removed from the home in exactly the same manner in which he or she was brought inside. The funeral procession, just like today, was led by the funeral director. In some instances, however, in lieu of a hearse and cars, family and friends processed on foot. The casket was placed on a casket bier with pallbearers guiding, the funeral director leading and the mourners following. After the funeral service there was usually a slight delay before proceeding to the cemetery. It was at this time that the casket was brought to the front of the church and reopened. The mourners gathered round for the customary photograph, which, in our case, was often sent to the deceased's relatives in Hungary. Following the photo session, the casket was closed and the procession to the cemetery began.

Years ago when they had a funeral a lot of people would come from the country—from little

towns—in a horse and buggy. In those days it took about two hours to get to Calvary Cemetery, so in the horse and buggy they would put hot bricks on the floor of the buggy to keep their feet warm because there was no heat in a buggy. Then they would come back from the cemetery and they would have a dinner or luncheon for the people who came to the funeral so that when they went home, which was a two-, three-hour drive in a horse and buggy, they would not go home hungry.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

A long time ago, they used to have the funerals at the house because a lot of people did not take their loved ones over to the mortuary. Our custom was, we had it right here in our homes, and that was in the thirties. In '39—I remember from my own mother—we had her in this home. This was hers and that's where we had it. . . . We kept our body home for two days. . . . All night long we had friends stay over at the house. They didn't go to sleep; they stayed up all night with the body. They had at least two, three men, they stayed. . . . They played cards and had sandwiches to eat, and they stayed up until we got up the next day.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

The Catholic church celebrates a Mass for the deceased. Once inside the church, a white pall cloth is placed over the casket. The pall cloth symbolizes and recalls our baptism. Today the cloth is white, years ago everything was black.

### **William Kertesz**

I can still remember a few funerals. Depending on the person's stature, he was buried with a band. I can remember some of those. From the churches the hearse was escorted by the band to Front and Consaul. Nearing the cemetery the band escorted the hearse the last few blocks to the final resting place. After the services, we returned to the house of the deceased. We were served good food

and we toasted the departed. In those days the body was laid out at home, and there was always someone with the body—twenty-four hours a day—till buried.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

We had, years ago in Birmingham, about five different gypsy orchestras—the real typical gypsies that played Hungarian music. We had in Birmingham a cymbalom player. He was called King of the Gypsy Players in the United States and he lived on York Street. I remember he died and they buried him from St. Stephen's Church, and the day they buried him there were about four hundred gypsies with violins and clarinets leading the funeral all the way to the church. From all over the United States they came to pay respects to the King of the Gypsy Players. They used to have a Hungarian band every time. When a man died, they would lead the funeral up to the Ash-Consaul bridge, playing a funeral march.

### **Agnes Gadus McDaniel**

All I remember about funerals is that my Uncle Joe died when he was only twenty-one at the time and I was about six years old. I remember that the wake was held at our house and the body and casket were in the living room. Friends and neighbors would take turns staying up all night for three nights. Also, at burial time the family would have a photographer take pictures of the dead and friends surrounding the casket. I remember, too, that the day of the funeral they had girls in white carrying flowers. And the other thing I remember clearly, in the event of a death a wreath was hung on the outside of the person's home—purple for grownups and pink for children.

## HOLIDAYS

### Mike Dandar

My mother used to have all the children and grandchildren over Easter Sunday, Mother's Day, Father's Day, Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. We just got together ever since I can remember. We had our holiday meal. Usually my mother would have a turkey on those days—turkey, stuffed cabbage, dressing, whatever—except on Easter.

The men used to eat in the dining room and the ladies and the children used to eat in the kitchen. I'm trying to think of how many adults there were; there were probably fourteen, sixteen of us and then my mother and father had sixteen grandchildren, maybe even nineteen later on, 'cause a couple were born after my dad died and so there were at least thirty of us in the house on those kinds of days, especially on Christmas night. After dinner we would have singalongs, Hungarian songs and English songs. Someone would bring a favorite record that we had and we would have singalongs. Sometimes we would play cards afterwards and we would even have a supper of leftovers at six o'clock—just warm up what we had and then we'd leave after that because people had to go to work the next day and the kids had to go to school. . . . My dad, even when we were kids, he'd bring out the wine before the meals if the youngsters wanted it. Why, of course, we grew up with wine. I can remember going to grade school, especially in the wintertime, to brew up some tea and pour some wine into it. Of course my dad made his own wine and there was never a lack of it. That's the way our holidays went.

Now Easter was a special thing. When we were kids we used to have Lenten services on Wednesday and Friday evenings. And then on Holy Week we went to church Wednesday and Thursday evenings, then Good Friday, Holy Saturday and then Sunday morning. Usually at daybreak we would have the Resurrection Mass and after that the family would come over and partake of the big Easter

meal. Easter was different from the other days. Easter was what we call a "dry meal." Everything was cooked beforehand; the ham was cooked beforehand. In the old countries, during the Easter season they didn't do much cooking on Sunday. They usually tried to prepare it all before and that way even the women could observe the Easter holiday without having to work—cook the ham, the sausage, the *kolbasz*. It was smoked so that it would keep, and the veal dressing was made the day before and it was usually served cold.

My mother made a cheese out of milk and eggs, which my wife does, too. You make it in a round bowl. You mix eggs and milk, and I think she puts sugar in it—my mother used to put raisins in it, too. Then you boil it for so long, then you let it sit. And what you do is you pour it into a towel or a rag of some sort, and then pull the ends together and just let the whey drip out into a pan, and then it becomes solidified, and it is served cold, too.

My dad used to live on horseradish. It's usually a tradition on Easter to have horseradish. My dad used to raise horseradish right in the back yard, and on Saturday he would start grinding that, and you would walk in and your eyes would start to tear just from the smell of the horseradish. Those were some of the things that we had at Easter time.

### **William Pasztor**

When Easter came around people took a basket of food, which consisted of ham, sausage, hard-boiled egg and a special *szirke* that they made of the yellow of eggs and milk. They would take this food to church and have it blessed, and it would be the Easter meal.

### **Mary Bence**

At Easter time, our tradition had always been . . . after seven weeks of Lent when you're not supposed to eat meat and have to fast—[to] take our food to church to be blessed. We take that now on Saturday afternoon, before Easter Sunday, and of

course they still bless it on Sunday morning. But at that time they would only bless it on Sunday morning. But we always had a veal pocket, which would be a veal roast with dressing in it and made (sewed together) to look like a lamb because it was the lamb of God.

### **Lucy Romano Hornyak**

They always had a dance on Easter Monday, that's the Monday after Easter. Because, you see, then in Lent it was more strict. When I was little you couldn't even turn the radio on or anything. You couldn't get married during Lent, or you couldn't have dances. You didn't have parties.

### **Mary Garand**

We had an Easter blessing at Easter time. We took a basket of food to the church and had the priest bless our basket of food. You took your best hand towel and covered up the food as you carried a nice basket to church. Everybody wanted a nice basket. It wasn't just an ordinary basket. We didn't eat anything until we had it all blessed on Holy Saturday.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

My next favorite holiday was Easter and the day before—taking the basket to church and getting the food blessed, covering it with some beautiful cloth. All the eggs had to be peeled and the meat cut up—ham cut up into bite-size pieces so you don't waste anything that is blessed.

Many people would sew things. Because everybody would see the cloth in the church when you would put your basket down in the aisleway, your cloth had to be starched and white, and as white as it could be, and colorful as it could be with the flowers on it. I have two really gorgeous ones: one that my grandmother always used, and then I have one that was bought in Hungary.

### **Velma Jambor Lengel**

The food that was blessed was not allowed to be touched, and because it was blessed you had to be very careful how to eat it, not to get it all over the floor. People used to line up [with] baskets and pretty covers on it and go to church. They still do that; that custom is still in.

They were fancy, especially at first, you know. A lot of them had come from Hungary and lots of them remembered how to make those covers. They were twine with work like in between the cloth and you're pulling the cloth off and the strings out and it makes a design, red and white; some people had kerchiefing on it and . . . it got to be real fancy at one time.

### **Francis Szollosi**

On Holy Saturday everybody—hundreds of people—took food to the church, all the churches, to have it blessed in beautiful baskets with hand-embroidered linen on top of it, and the priest would bless the food like the loaves and fishes.

### **John Bistayi**

During Easter, our so-called Holy Week, we had a church service every night but not only did you have church services but you had visitors, ministers—one even came from New York. These were outstanding Hungarian ministers and they'd have a guest minister nearly every night, men that were outstanding in Hungarian, you know, Hungarian language.

### **William Szabo**

Connected with Easter was a lot of baking and cooking and food feasting. They made all these nut rolls and fine pastries that the Hungarian women knew how to make, and sausages and hams and it was sort of a magnified Thanksgiving. It was more than Thanksgiving is in this country today. It was quite a bit more. The women would make these long sticks—about twenty inches long and about an

inch in diameter—of dough that they put in pans and into the ovens. And they would bake that and it would come out kind of a dryish bread-like thing, and they would slice it into lengths about an inch long, and then they would put various dressings on them, like crushed poppy seeds, and they called it *guba*.

### **Victoria Oravec**

You make all those Hungarian long loaves with the poppy seed or the nuts; then they had some you could make, those little cakes with apricots or the nuts or prunes. . . . You could even make it with jelly, put jelly filling in it. We make all kinds of fancy cakes. It's a feast and that's the way it should be. It goes down from generation to generation.

### **Francis Szollosi**

Easter is the second biggest holiday of the year. In the Hungarian neighborhood everyone abstained from having a good time all during Lent. There were never any dances; men seldom went into a bar room to drink. So, Easter Monday was always the night of the big bash because Lent was over. There was always a huge dance, sometimes two or three various dances in Birmingham on Easter Monday. We can celebrate now that Lent is over and everyone can have a good time. And on Easter Monday the young men would visit the young ladies in their homes to sprinkle perfumed water on them, as a sign of friendship. On Easter Tuesday the young ladies would reverse the procedure.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

The day after Easter, when I was a kid, the boys in the neighborhood would come around and knock on your door and sprinkle you with perfumed water. In some cases if you couldn't get your hands on your mother's perfume you would put powder in it and you would really make a mess—powdered water. And a sprinkle of that was a sign of affection, but there were some that would come around with



buckets of water (particularly your brother) and give you a good dousing with a bucket of water. That was a fun time. I think it was the Monday for the boys to come around and Tuesday it was the girl's time to come around and sprinkle the boys. That was fun.

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

They would come Easter Monday . . . and they would ask if there were young girls in the house, and some boys would bring perfume water and some would go to the other extreme and get a bucket of water—take a cup and dump it over your head, you know. And I had one experience where I hid and I came out and they were at the door, and I let them in and they took a cup and sprinkled me and I got a bruise. We used to have Easter Monday dances and I went to the dance with that bruise.

### **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

On Easter Monday, which is the day after Easter, the boys would go around with their rose water or perfumed water and sprinkle the girls that they were keen about. You know, they would go and sprinkle them and the girls would give them candy or something like that for coming over to see them. But then the next day the girls would go sprinkle the boys with vengeance with a pitcher of water. The women also liked to sprinkle their mailmen as a friendly gesture.

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### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

Every June St. Stephen's Church has the Corpus Christi procession. It takes place directly following High Mass at about 10:45. Father Hernady proceeds with the blessed sacrament to various altars along Genesee Street, where the Host is exposed. The procession stops at the front steps of the funeral home where we traditionally had had an altar just inside the front doors. From here the procession continues on to Genesee Street where

they stop at four or more other altars; then they go back to church, then they go home.

### **Wilma Thomas**

One thing that remains as before is the Corpus Christi procession on Genesee Street. Since I've been here (and I suppose since the beginning of the church, which would be over seventy-five years ago) the people on Genesee Street paint their trees white for the Corpus Christi procession because it proceeds down our street, since it is right behind the church. Traditionally there are supposed to be four altars on the street, one for the north, south, east and west. The Blessed Sacrament is carried in the procession, which stops at each altar for benediction, and the parishioners sing the traditional hymns.

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

They would march in the streets [for Corpus Christi] and people would have a little, like a little altar, out of greens, you know, tree branches. . . . The priest would stop [and] . . . kneel down, say a prayer; and some people would put holy pictures in the window—the Sacred Heart, the Blessed Virgin—on the block of Genesee where I lived. The people would whitewash the trees, you know, for the event, and they still do it now on the one block of Genesee where the church is.

### **Victoria Oravec**

We always had Corpus Christi—a lovely tradition, benediction, procession and then all the little children were all dressed up; the first communicants were all dressed in their white dresses and veil and the boys, too. In those days most of the little boys wore white suits for First Holy Communion—all of my brothers did, and even my children; my son, did too. From the church they go. They have little altars outside decorated. . . . in front of their homes and Father goes to each one of these altars and he says a prayer and he blesses the people with the Blessed Sacrament. Then they go back into the

church and they have Mass, every Corpus Christi. And they go out—the societies go out—and they march with the flags. We still have it.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **William Kertesz**

Many years ago, when the harvesting was done in the old country, the people had a big festival such as an Oktoberfest or a harvest dance. Well, the church continued the tradition with a big Szureti Ball or Grape Festival. A huge horse-drawn hay wagon filled with musicians, followed by the people in native costume, paraded through the neighborhood to advertise and put the people in a festive mood.

The annual summer picnics of the churches [were] done the same way; they were usually held in Suto's Grove on Yondota Road and they were always well attended. Occasionally the musicians would play a *hallgato*. It was like a ballad, a song you listen to. And these gypsy musicians were pretty good because they produced quite a few moist eyes and lumpy throats. Some people were a little homesick, I suppose.

### **Joseph Szegedi**

We would have what you call a *hallgato*; in Hungarian [it] means dinner listening music. In other words, most of them are ballads. They almost all have a story to them, all love stories, most of it. Then after that you have what they call *kuple*, a little pick-up number, then you have "csardas," which they dance to. You have a slow *csardas*, which says "bless you" in Hungarian and they have a *friss csardas*, which means "fast" and translated to American, English, the fast *csardas* you see them spin around. They dance around and then we play the Hungarian *keringo*, which is a style of waltz.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

We have our Hungarian night in the fall when

the grapes are all ripe. . . . We have a grape vine built up in our hall and it's a custom for little girls to dress up in Hungarian clothes (and little boys), and the people steal the grapes and the little boys run over to catch them and they pay a fine. If they don't pay, they got to go to jail. They gotta pay themselves out, you know, just for the fun.

### **Lucy Romano Hornyak**

They would always have a Harvest Ball, which is the grape festival. The children dressed in the Hungarian costumes and they marched down the street in the afternoon and they'd go back to the church. (Now they do it on Hungarian night, but before we did it on the first Sunday after Labor Day.) We'd always have this and they'd march; the band would get on a truck and the children would go right along with them. I think they'd march, oh, two, four, five blocks, and they'd come back to the church. Then they had all these grapes hanging and the people would steal them, and then they'd catch them and they would have to pay a penalty for taking the grapes. They had to pay money. They'd charge maybe a nickel or a dime if you stole a bunch of grapes. Now it's more. They had a judge and they'd fine you. And it was a tradition that they had then.

### **Mary Garand**

They had a big fenced, great big yard, and it was an open-air dance—and the men wore Hungarian costumes. They had the grapes and apples above you and if you could snap a bunch and steal it and wouldn't get caught it would be all yours to eat; but if they caught you, you had to go to the judge, which was sitting at the end of the room, and he'd fine you a dollar or whatever. He'd say, "Fifty cents for stealing those grapes." That was part of the tradition. I never did it because I was too young but I would see it being done by other people. It was all dancing and singing, a lot of noise making, Hungarian music. Probably Hungarian gypsies were the orchestra people.

### **Ann Lucas**

In regard to church fund raisers, the parish was self-supporting; you had to be because people in our neighborhood just didn't have the cash. We didn't have money. You had to get together, to work, to present something to the public that they would come in and buy. From this has evolved our chicken dinners, for which St. Stephen's is very well known, and also the ethnic festival which is based primarily on the idea of the central European theme. . . . The food that the parishes offer is ethnic in flavor: *kolbasz*, stuffed cabbage, pigs-in-the-blanket, chicken dumplings. Our neighborhood has built a reputation on these ideas that the people will get together and work hard and present something to the rest of the city that we can really be proud of.

### **William Pasztor**

Every society and organization in the church at one time or another would throw a supper and a dance and this was a fund-raising campaign. And we had a lot of church suppers, a lot of church dances with Hungarian and American music. And, of course we had the annual Harvest Festival Ball, which was quite a tradition. The churches had Boy Scouts and choir and altar boys. The altar boys had an organization of their own and they had a lot of activities in order to raise money to keep going because people were not making too much money and times were pretty bad.

### **Elizabeth Borics**

Well years ago we had what we called the three-day festival but we actually worked four days ahead. We had to bake our own pies the day before and then we cleaned fish—we always cleaned one hundred pounds of fish—and made homemade french fries; we peeled our own potatoes and we made a machine to cut our potatoes. Bread, of course, we always had homemade; everything was homemade at that time. On Friday night was the fish fry and on Saturday we would have a smorgas-

bord. All different kinds of things, like *kielbasa* and spaghetti and different things. On Sunday we always had our famous roast beef dinners.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

Being Hungarian, I'm a great lover of Hungarian food and my favorite is stuffed cabbage. In Hungarian it is *toltott kaposzta*.

### **Mary Garand**

Sundays it was chicken soup and baked chicken with dressing and stuffed cabbage in the evening, typical Hungarian style—sometimes breaded veal, which was my mother's favorite. . . . My mother used to make noodles and then she made it real small, like a little piece of rice and that was sour-like. They used sauerkraut . . . not too sour, but it had a sour tingle to it.

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

I've been married fifty years and I've been making it ever since. . . the butter cakes, nut rolls and the pastry I only make for special occasions, and the stuffed cabbage more often, and chicken *paprikash* and veal *paprikash*.

### **Ann Lucas**

At St. Stephen's . . . what was really well-known was our feather party. But in the old days it was a real feather party—I mean there were live fowl. I don't think you ate chicken *paprikash* though; I think it was pork and various other kinds of meats. But the prizes were always chickens, turkeys, ducks. People took these live animals home.

### **Helen Georgoff Munson**

In those days they did not call them festivals; they called them bazaars. And farmers brought in live chickens and turkeys, ducks and rabbits. They had flowers, sugar and other things they raffled off. . . . We never called it festivals, that came in with the younger generation.

### **Alberta Traylor**

When they had different functions, it was nothing to see the Hungarian people in complete dress. The ladies, the Hungarian aunts and the uncles—they'd have on some Hungarian costumes; even the little children had on the costumes like they wore when they were in the old country. When they had Christmas or special holidays . . . you could see the Hungarian people walking through the community.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

Christmas time we have our church decorated beautifully, and we have Midnight Mass and our old custom.

### **William Kertesz**

Christmas was always a big holiday, along with Easter. I remember being an altar boy on all those occasions. There were colorful processions within the church, students led by the clergy. My favorite was wearing the long white cassock, red cape with gold fringes, collar and red bow.

### **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

Christmas was a very special time. We belonged to the Hungarian Reformed Church, which is Calvin United Church of Christ. We would go Christmas caroling the night before Christmas and then we would go to church services and get boxes of candy to bring home.

### **John Bistayi**

The sound of Christmas was constant for a week. For example, in our church we had church services every night.

### **Lucy Romano Hornyak**

We always have a birthday cake for baby Jesus, and the youngest in the family gets to light

the candle (an Italian custom). And that's been since I've married and had children, and that's always on Christmas.

### **William Pasztor**

During Christmas we would send out a troop of boys from the different churches—St. Michael's and St. Stephen's—and they were called *Bethlehemishes*; that's a Hungarian word meaning "Christmas carolers." They carried a little manger with them. There were six singers and one pre-Christian pagan, and they would go to the different homes and they would put on a little play with Christmas hymns. I was one till I was twenty-one years old. My costume was a white blouse and white Hungarian pleated pants of linen with ribbons and a big hat with ribbons dangling, painted red, white and blue. They carried sticks which they would bang in time to the music.

### **Ann Lucas**

At Christmas time we have the nativity play, and that is where the shepherds who come to adore the child meet the devil who is in the disguise of the wolf. It is a morality play. It is a medieval play, where you have good on one side and evil on the other, and the good overcomes the evil. Now this pageant play is presented at Midnight Mass at St. Stephen's Church. It used to be that the shepherds and the other two characters dressed in wolfish costumes and carried axes, and were in bells and were really terrifying. They would go from house to house and for a small donation they would put on this play. Now, when every homeowner now is not a member of the church and very often these customs are misunderstood by people who have no background in this religious part of Christmas, it can be over-disturbing. In fact, that's one of the reasons they have discontinued going out on the street. . . . So, consequently, the morality play of Christmas is only presented at Midnight Mass.



### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

At St. Stephen's Church during Christmas they had the *Bethlehemishes*. Before Midnight Mass this group of men visited various houses in the neighborhood with their singing; eventually they wound up in church at midnight, where they performed a short play. The church is the same today. From the Christmas hymns, the baby Jesus in the crib, the Christmas trees, the lights, the beautiful flowers; it's all the same as always.

### **William Szabo**

The *Bethlehemishes* . . . are on a pilgrimage to Christ and the guys are supposed to be the heathens. They were called the *oregek*, the old ones. They didn't believe and the other ones were trying to make them believe. Of course, these *oregek* (the old ones) would chase the kids. They had ax handles with wooden axes on the end; the kids would taunt them and they'd throw these ax handles after the kids and oh, they'd like to have them chase them. It was sort of an ethnic feature of the Mass.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

My favorite, as well as all the neighborhood, was the *Bethlehemishes*, the [Christmas] pageant that's performed by the people. . . . They come on your porch and hit your porch floor with bells that would ring. You'd open your door and they would come in and do their performance for you. In my case I got to see it often because they came into the restaurant daily and it was fun to watch the people not from the neighborhood and to see their eyes open like saucers and wonder what sort of bizarre thing was going on.

It was done for the church; they would collect money afterward. . . . There might have been three groups going around at that time from the three Catholic churches, certainly two. In any case I got to see that more than most people did because of the restaurant. The fur-masked one is pretty spooky and he chases the kids around and chops at the

kids' feet with a dull axe. Of course they didn't know it was dull. There was just mischief.

It was different when it was performed in the restaurant than it was when it was performed on Christmas Eve. There is nothing like it. It just sends chills through you when it is performed in church on Christmas Eve. . . . [The *oregek*] parade down the full length of the church and start singing their song, and to this day you just get goose pimples all over.

### **Velma Jambor Lengel**

The *oregek* was chasing me. The two main people (characters) were dressed in hairy costumes and the kids were scared to death of them, and I ran from one and he chased me up to my door and I was yelling, "Ma, open the door," and I broke the glass and cut my leg. I knew the people and I was still afraid of them.

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

They used to rap at each door. Some people would just give a donation; some people would let them come in and would say a speech and sing a song. . . . They would be dressed up in white outfits with a tall paper hat similar to a shepherd with ribbons of Hungary on it, and they had the little child Jesus in the crib. That was the idea of Christmas, you know. At Mass they would go in the front and kneel down during service.

### **Joel Vargo**

My mother always said that if ever I could do anything for St. Mike's, I should. So, I had the opportunity of joining the *Bethlehemishes* and I started out as an angel; that was kind of a low job of the troop. You had to carry the church for three days and believe me, that church gets heavy, especially when you've "had a few." So, after the years went by I worked myself up to the devil—now they call him the pagan. . . .

We used to go through the neighborhood; it was a three-day event. If you were working you'd

have to take off from work and work for the church [on] Christmas Eve day— Christmas and the day after. Christmas Eve we'd always hit the bars in the neighborhood and at one time there were thirty-three bars in Birmingham. . . but that was our big night. And all the money we made went to the church. In fact, I believe there is a gold plaque in St. Michael's hall that has my name on it because I donated so much money.

We'd go into a home—but first you'd ask permission to go into the home—and if permitted we'd put on a play. We'd have the devil who was dressed in scary mask—the girls used to hate that—and we'd have two angels carrying the church; we'd have shepherds. Then we'd try to convert the devil. We'd carry big, long sticks with noise makers on the end of them—and the devil in a scary mask—and wear cow bells and all that.

### **Mary Bence**

At our church at Midnight Mass they still have [the pageant] but only at Midnight Mass. It's the same ritual, but they used to go throughout the whole neighborhood, go from house to house. And the Greek Catholic church—that's St. Michael's, located on Bogar—well they would have it and our church [St. Stephen's] would have it.

### **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

In those days Christmas was not like it is today. We were happy if we put out our stocking, and in the morning Santa Claus would fill our stockings with nuts and fruit and maybe some little toys and trinkets. We'd find our biggest stocking that we had and we would stick that up someplace for Santa Claus to fill. I can remember that we wouldn't have our Christmas tree up until we'd go to sleep on Christmas Eve and then my mother and father would stay up late and put up our Christmas tree. . . . They were live Christmas trees. The smell was real nice—the pine smell. But we would have our Christmas tree right up till after New Year's, and

if it would last maybe we would keep it up a few more days until the needles would start falling. We were a lucky family. We always had a Christmas tree and I was very grateful.

### **Mary Garand**

We always had a [Christmas] tree. One of our trees tipped over and we almost had a fire. I don't know what happened, but somebody tried to reach something and it tipped the tree over and it started to burn. We had candles, not electric.

My mother did a lot of baking, baked Hungarian Christmas cookies. . . . My mother always cooked a lot. She always had turkey dressing and chicken and we always had soup. My father had to have soup.

Oh, it was exciting; you know how kids get. We'd get all the candy and oranges during Christmas time that we didn't have during the year. Well, the oranges were an extra special thrill because we didn't buy oranges all year.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

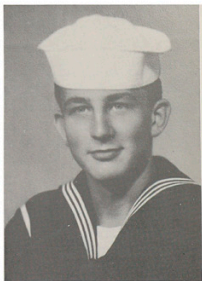
[Maybe] your father was handy at making a wagon, or . . . your mother would make a doll and the children were happy with it because they didn't have much. But the thought of some gift coming from Santa Claus! We all had a firm belief in Santa Claus!

### **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

We would go caroling on Christmas Eve around in the community and come back and have refreshments at the Birmingham Library. They'd have the fire lit for us and we would sing carols there at the library. . . . Many of us had never seen a wood-burning fireplace and it was really something for us to sit around telling stories. We'd have cookies and we'd all get a nice red apple, or in those days a great big Sunkist or a Blue Goose orange. They'd give us nuts and we'd take that home.

## **Mary Garand**

After Christmas they blessed our home for the Epiphany. It was done by a priest and he'd bring a couple altar boys and they'd come in and bless every room. . . . Then they'd put a sign up on the wall with chalk—"C" for Caspar, and "M" for Mendazar and "B" for Boldazar—and mark it 1985 or 1960 or whatever year it was blessed. It was done every year (my mother had it done every year), and you give the priest a couple dollars for doing that. On the wall, on top of the front door—the first door as you come out or go inside--and you could always see it. You never want to rub it off, you know; you would leave it there.



## SECTION IV

### GREAT DEPRESSION

#### **Margaret Brezvai**

I remember . . . pulling a wagon and going for food, and I remember my dad going to the railroad and getting coal, and sweeping wheat.

We used to have a lot more soups, which was homemade [and] a lot more noodles. Lots of Hungarian food—not that much meat. And we used to eat things like spaghetti, macaroni, things like that.

In order to find a job, you really had to know somebody and get pull. And if you knew somebody and any of the things people worked at, then they would help you to get a job.

The Ohio Bank closed and a lot of people lost their money. I know my dad lost some in there. He had just put it in. When my mother died, what he got in insurance he put it in, and then of course the bank closed. I think, it was about two or three days after he put the money in, which made it hard, and it was hard for us to get along. It was hard for him losing his wife and having two children, my brother and I. My brother was seven when my mother died and I was fourteen, so we had rough goings.

#### **Anna Pocse**

The depression was bad. I hope we never have to go through that. Nobody worked. You couldn't buy a job and everybody doubled up so that you wouldn't have to pay rent. Younger people, when they first got married, they all went on their own, and when the Depression came in they all doubled up so they could save on rent. And they just had to save wherever they could.

We just got married then. Naturally, we came and lived with our in-laws and we stayed here. See grandma and grandpa were here and we stayed with them. We stayed here twenty-five years. And then grandma and grandpa died in the course of time. First, grandpa died and then grandma died. We were married about twenty-five years before we were

alone. But then it was really, really bad times. The men used to gather at different people's houses and they used to play cards, you know, just to kill the monotony, because there was nothing to do.

### **Elizabeth Borics**

Many people lived together with their parents or their grandparents to save money because they could not pay for their utilities. The utilities were cheap but the people did not have the money to pay them. They sometimes got help for food from the government. They would have a little surplus food that they would give people and we would have to go to the fire station to get it.

### **William Kertesz**

Bread at that time was eleven cents a loaf. I went there [National Bakery] on many occasions (or my brother did) for three loaves of bread a day for thirty-three cents, and it was Mary Tovcar and her husband had the bakery. She carried us and many others on credit for a long time, as did Mike Farkas, the butcher, and Richard Meyers.

### **Mary Mahler**

Depression during that time was very hard. There was work but only in factories that made the ships. The shipyard was busy and places like that, but that was a great depression. Many of them died during that time because they had the influenza. They did not ever show them, they just took them and buried them. It was an epidemic like that and very bad. Mothers would die and leave five, six children.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

Nobody had too much money. We survived on what little we had and if you didn't have money to buy meat we'd make some potato soup and bread. That would fill you up.



### **Agnes Gadus McDaniel**

In the beginning of the depression era I was attending Central Catholic High School, but in the fall of 1930 I was forced to continue my education at Waite High School because my parents couldn't pay the tuition at Central, which was only twenty dollars a year. No one in our family was working and we did the best we could to survive. The government did issue some food staples such as flour, margarine, powdered milk and lard. There may have been other items but I do not remember. I worked on weekends doing housework in order to help myself through school and to help my parents as much as I could. I had learned to sew at an early age so I was able to make clothes for myself and my three sisters. We must remember that girls did not wear jeans or pants at that time; only dresses, skirts and blouses. Sometimes we could buy material as low as ten cents a yard.

My husband and I were married in 1934 during the midst of the depression era. . . . He only worked three days a week at the Chevrolet and eventually was laid off completely and went to work for the WPA, which started during Franklin Roosevelt's presidency. This was a real blessing for us because—while he only made about twenty dollars a week—we were able to buy food, pay our rent and other bills. At the time we were only paying twenty dollars a month rent for our apartment on Consaul Street.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

We were very poor in the thirties and we didn't have all this good time that we have today. Everything was poor, a lot of people didn't even work. We didn't have lights in our house. We didn't have gas in our house, so we had to use coal stoves to warm up and we didn't have boots. We walked to work, in our days, across the Ash[-Consaul] bridge.

### **William Kertesz**

We had a lot of good times during these bad

times because we seemed to stick together and share. Many things could be had for free if you knew how, where and when to get them. Coal could be obtained by kicking it off a hopper car on the Wheeling and Lake Erie, and other family members would pick it up. I can still see the people lined up along the track with their wagons and sacks. There were just too many of them for the railroad police; sometimes there were shootings. People were breaking into sealed box cars. They were cold and hungry. Wood was also obtained from the railroad. For this you needed permission. Old wood removed from box cars was discarded at the rear of the car shop, and if you asked for it it was there for the taking.

I remember many trips to the fire house with our relief card. You got a postcard for relief, and you went to the fire house and you picked up your cans of food. . . . [Tommy Teachout] was the one who gave me oranges, potatoes, canned food, from Number 13 engine house. In 1952 when I got on the job Tommy Teachout was just going to retire then. I remembered him. He'd say, "Yeah, you came from a pretty big family." Nobody was looking, he'd give me an extra scoop of potatoes, with a big shovel, or an extra scoop of oranges.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

The history of the hot dogs started at that point because one of the items on the menu was a sausage sandwich for ten cents. Of course, during the depression people didn't even have the ten cents and very often they'd come in and ask for half of a sandwich, which was a source of great embarrassment to them. About the same time the breadman was telling my dad about a coney island bun. They had just started to make the coney island buns, the frankfurter roll buns, and he suggested to him to put half a sausage on the bun. My dad worried about the embarrassment caused by having to ask for half of a sandwich and how could he serve it—how could he prepare it so it would be a whole item. . . . The breadman brought in these rolls, and dad

put the half sausage in that roll and put the mustard and onions on that and then decided to dress it up. He started to work on the sauce—meat sauce recipe—so that it would be different from the other sandwich and not be a half of something. So, to this day it still is cut in half. . . . People will swear that we started cutting the sausage in half yesterday. In fact, it was in 1932. That's how it came to be, or else there wouldn't be a Tony Packo hot dog today if it hadn't been [for] the depression.

### **Velma Jambor Lengel**

I know it was hard to get food, it was hard to get sugar and stuff. We had to buy, we had to get stamps for different things and it was hard on everybody. My dad didn't work and nobody was working. We were just living on very meager food because we had to use stamps, and we got help from the government, but they always gave you things you really didn't need, like they always do—oranges and potatoes and onions and stuff in bulk, maybe sugar once in a while—but it was very hard. It was terrible, although I only paid \$8.50 per month rent at the time. But that's all my husband made. You wouldn't believe it that at one day you would be making so much money. I worked for a while just before I graduated and I was making \$8.00 a week, and that was good money.

During the depression I went over here on Genesee Street to a building. I was the youngest so I always had to go get everything with the wagon, and I used to be ashamed to go. I didn't want to be on welfare, but what can you do when there is nothing to eat? All we ate was mostly soup because that went the furthest, and they gave us bacon once in a while and that didn't go far either, so we learned to be more thrifty than children nowadays. Then [of] course the banks all went broke and people were jumping off bridges and high buildings and killing themselves every which way they could.

## **Elmer Lucas**

The depression was possibly hard on the stores, possibly harder on the families. The stores probably carried quite a number of people there in the neighborhood that were unable to pay for the food. I know we received aid. I would go down to pick up milk and bread with tickets, down just a little ways from where the present library is now. Once a week I remember going with my dad there. We would get our weekly allotment of meat and bulk food like flour, oatmeal and couple potatoes, things like that.

I know it must have been difficult for my father and mother because there was nothing there that they could really do to give their children any more because there wasn't anything they could give without work. It had to hurt their self esteem and pride, of course.

## **Anna Pocse**

The men applied for jobs that were listed for the WPA. . . . The older men worked there and then the younger men that weren't married, they enlisted in the Conservation Corps. It was like a camp. They had to be a certain age; they'd take them away and they'd go to different parts of the state. Some even went as far as Wyoming and they took care of the parks—cleaned up all the parks, cleaned up all the leaves, and all that stuff and built these little wooden fences all around. And they got so much money, and the boys over there they kept them; they had room and board. Of course, it didn't cost them anything for that, but then they gave them a wage, too. That didn't amount to much but it still gave them something to work for. They stayed there one year and then for the next summer they got another bunch of boys that would go. See, those were the boys that didn't get to go to school.

## **Mary Mahler**

We were on the poor side. My dad was sick all the time. The doctors thought he had TB, but it

wasn't. So, my mom had boarders. She charged \$30.00 per month—later it was \$40.00 for a room, food and washing—to bring us up. And when we started to school we didn't have boots, we had shoes; and then my mom would wrap rags around our feet so they wouldn't get cold, and put big shawls around us and [we] went to school like that.

### **Andrew Pocse**

Coal, I used to steal it. I didn't steal it, I would say that I just "borrowed" it, because it was a necessity. We had to do it in order to keep the house warm and the biggest part of the neighborhood done that. And we used to steal it right over here, this railroad track right here. They used to run the Wheeling and Lake Erie, the New York Central, the B & O, the Pere and Marquette, and the trains used to come down there. And they'd bring coal and sometimes they had to stop the engines in order to let the trains from the terminal in. So, when they would stop, we would be waiting for them, and we would get on top of the coal cars and start throwing coal and hauling it home. I had coal all over here.

I used to throw coal just to stay in shape, but there was always enough people that would take it home because they needed it—I mean some of those old timers in the neighborhood. The women used to haul it home in burlap sacks on their backs. They had to have it. . . . They tried to get it in the summer and early in the fall so they'd have it for the winter-time. There was no gas. They had to fire with coal in the kitchen and they had a heating stove. That's how they done it. It wasn't like it is now. You couldn't buy it. So you had to go out and get it the way you could get it. It was a necessity, that's the way I look at it. It was either that or freeze.

## **MILITARY SERVICE**

### **Priscilla Taylor**

When the war started in 1917, the army, you know, was recruiting people—men for the service—

and my father said he can't because he just came over to this country and he's not a citizen; and they said, "That's all right, if you join the army you'll become a citizen." My father says no he don't think he'd better 'cause he's got a father and a couple of brothers and cousins that were still living there in Hungary, and he didn't feel he wanted to fight, you know, against them, 'cause, you know, they could have. I know a lot of men didn't go to service but my father, after a little bit of coaxing, my father said O.K., he'll go into the service if they don't send him overseas. They said, "O.K., we'll find something to do." Well, my father wasn't trained for anything—he was a young man, seventeen or eighteen—and they gave him an instrument to play—the clarinet—and they formed a band. When the boys would go overseas the band would play for them a farewell, when they came home the band welcoming them back home. So, that's how the band started in the service and he did stay in the air force. He was in the 37th Infantry, 37th Division and the 140th Division Band and he stayed there for thirty, thirty-five years before retiring. . . .

There was a big celebration [at the end of WWII]. I know a lot of people from the East Side went over across the bridge and there was thousands of people in the streets, and we'd formed the snake dance and that was all through downtown, and ticker tapes and things were going. There was music and noise—everybody had a good time—never got home till midnight; just danced and partied all night long, we were so happy the war was over.

### **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

After high school I went to Harrington School of Interior Design in Chicago. It was while I was in Chicago that World War II broke out. It was in 1941 and I can remember that very vividly and almost all the young men that were eighteen years and over went or were drafted into the army or they joined the navy or air force; a very few of them were in the coast guard. I can remember almost all of the boys in the

neighborhood were in the armed services and on Sundays when we would go to church the young men that would be home on furloughs and leaves would be all in church and we were very happy to see them and prayed that some day not too far away they would be home from the war. But that war lasted four years.

It was really a happy time when the war was over with Japan in August. I can remember that real clearly. It was the middle of the night, there were horns blowing and everybody went out on the streets. Some teenagers must have stolen our garbage can tops. They were hitting them together like tambourines, making noise up and down the street. That celebration lasted for two or three days. But that really was a happy time when that war was over. After the war when the boys came home there were many marriages because a lot of them didn't want to get married until after the war. Boyfriends were in service and they were gone overseas either in Europe fighting the Germans or in the Pacific fighting the Japanese. The German war was over first in May and it wasn't until August and the atomic bomb that Japan surrendered and the war was over in the Pacific.

After this, many of my friends were married. My husband and I were married just before the war ended. He was in the air force and was a lieutenant when he came home.

### **Agnes Gadus McDaniel**

World War II was quite a frightening experience for my husband and myself, because we had two small children and we were not sure whether he would be drafted or not (he was not), but I know that the Chevrolet where my husband worked made equipment for the army. There was a plea for women to go to work in some of the factories so I went to work at the Willys Overland Plant where the navy supervised the assembly of the center section of the Corsair fighter plane. They also made shells for bombs at this plant. I also did volunteer work for the

Red Cross for several years during World War II. Of course we all remember the rationing, meat, butter, shoes, gasoline and other items. But we didn't mind because we knew that we were somehow helping the boys overseas.

### **Elizabeth Borics**

If you had a car you were rationed four gallons of gasoline a week to get to your job, but if you had a job that was further than that then through the company they would give you a special card and you got extra gas. But you had to take people from your neighborhood to work.

### **Mary Bence**

I've been in the service. I went in the army in World War II. I was in the army from 1933 till December of 1945 and every chance I get, whenever I had a chance to go on leave I wouldn't go to see somebody in the area where I was at, I would always come home—to see the people back home because this was home.

### **William Szabo**

I was in World War II in the Sixth Armored Division, Third Army, General Patton's army. I very firmly believe that the Third Army could have beaten the Russians by a mile, or ten miles, to Berlin.

Toward the end of the war we captured thousands of Hungarian troops and I'd go in among these prisoners and tell them that I understood Hungarian and I was of Hungarian parentage and I'd just walk among them. I was an officer and I would listen to their comments and they'd speculate on my rank and so forth and as to why I was looking them over. You know, I'd look them over. I was just trying to find out what were they talking about. Some of them were actually fearful of execution and others would say, "These are civilized people, these Americans, they aren't going to hurt you" and there were some who doubted it.



### **Joseph Szegedi**

There's about fifty-five or sixty of us from Birmingham that was going in the army the same day. We all met at Tony's. I don't know, that was the hub of the neighborhood at that time. We all met there. So what happens then, the gypsy band was playing and they marched us all the way down to the Pennsylvania Station on Summit Street and they played there as we got on the train about seven or eight. . . .

One of the guys I know was in my wedding. I hadn't seen him from the day I left. He and I left the same time together. In fact, when we got in the army I had to interpret for him, that's how little English he knew. We were thirteen days together and then they separated us. . . . Well, anyhow, when I came . . . in Packo's front door he came in the side door and we met there and that's where we left, forty-two months previous!

### **William Pasztor**

During World War II, I enlisted in the army. I served three years overseas. I was in the African Campaign, the Sicilian Campaign and the Italian Campaign. I've earned five battle stars. I was in two invasions. When they drafted men from Birmingham, 20th Ward, we had the highest rate of acceptance of anywhere in the nation. The students from Birmingham School and St. Stephen's School and Holy Rosary School practically walked in; there were few rejections. The ones that were rejected were physically handicapped. We also organized the great Birmingham Post, Veterans of Foreign Wars, which is on the corner of Caledonia and Consaul.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

I was in World War II. I was in the army. I remember when World War II started, I remember I was drafted in the army and was worried about what was going to happen. . . . Things were pretty rough those days. You had to get rations for meat, you had to get stamps, you were allowed that much meat a

day and then maybe you were lucky to get a stamp for butter. . . . And they gave a stamp for shoes. You had to get a special stamp for shoes because they were saving everything to send overseas.

Oh, I had a lot of friends die that I grew up with. . . . There was a sad situation because every home had a soldier going to school, going to the army. They had the star in the window, every home had a star showing that they had a son in service. And the sadness of the mother and father [about] their son, wondering, is he going to come home alive? And then I had various bodies of men killed in service, and the sadness of the parents to come into the funeral home.

## **HUNGARIAN REVOLUTION OF 1956**

### **Wilma Thomas**

When the allies each took over a section of Europe after World War II, the Iron Curtain fell over Hungary as well as the other Russian-dominated countries. Nothing was heard of the Hungarian people for a long time. We got letters and packages through, but everything was censored. The people in Hungary decided to revolt in 1956. Some who came to the U. S. after the revolution said they had been assured through the underground that there would be help from America. No help came and the Hungarians were mowed down by Russian tanks. I spoke with several men who participated in the revolution. They had escaped but their families remained in Hungary, never free of danger and fear. The men themselves dared not return because they were posted as traitors to the Communist government, having been active members of the underground.

I knew one man in particular who had been an active worker in the underground in Hungary. He was an engineer and he had escaped in '56 after the revolution. He visited us several times and he was very disturbed because he had a wife and young

daughter still in Hungary. He couldn't stand not knowing what had happened to them because they weren't getting any communication through. His name was posted so that if he ever returned he would be immediately picked up and perhaps executed by the Communists because of his work in the underground. But he decided to return, although everybody advised him against going back. He planned to use an assumed name and try to find out what happened to his wife and child. So he did go back to Hungary and that's the last we ever heard from him. No one ever knew whether the authorities picked him up immediately, as soon as he came into the country, or what happened.

Another father and daughter came out but it was years before the mother was allowed to come. Much later when people came to visit with their relatives or friends in the United States, the whole family could not come at one time. The father could come or the mother and children but the whole family could not leave Hungary at one time. The government wanted them to return because they needed the work force in Hungary.

### **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**

I had gotten a copy of the *U.S. News and World Report* by October 25 or so and I gave a report on the revolution in Hungary at our church to the Ladies Missionary Guild. Consequently our minister asked me if I would serve on a committee of people from all the Hungarian denominational churches in Birmingham which consisted of the Hungarian Reform church (or Calvin United Church of Christ), St. Stephen's Church, St. Michael's Church and even some people of the Jewish faith.

We assembled at St. Stephen's Church rectory with the pastor being the host and we had our first meeting on Halloween night, formulating plans on how we can help the people in Hungary. I was probably one of three women at this meeting. We decided to have a women's group. We got together with the women from St. Stephen's and St. Michael's,

and we paired off. There would be one Protestant woman and one Catholic woman and we would go together and we planned to have a one-hour march around the neighborhood, very much like the March of Dimes. We started from St. Stephen's Church and we went around to all the homes asking for donations for the victims of the Hungarian Revolution in Hungary and in one hour's time we collected \$1300 in December of 1956. \$1300 was a lot of money and . . . we sent that to Hungary to pay for medical supplies and clothing.

Later the churches had brought together a lot of clothes from church drives and we had barrels that we were going to send to the people in Hungary, but shipping the clothing never materialized because by that time—within one week's time—Hungary had been taken over by the Communists. And they wouldn't allow any help to go into Hungary. Instead the barrels of clothing [were] distributed to these refugees and freedom fighters who came to Toledo from Camp Kilmer, New Jersey. Collingwood Avenue Presbyterian Church downtown accepted a full load of these people, young men that arrived here in Toledo. They had homes for them. Later most of these young men got married. In fact, the young man that works for us is the son of one of the Hungarian freedom fighters. I was the first person that interpreted Hungarian to the people that he was staying with. The people wanted to know about him and we went and helped the people of the various churches that took in some of these refugees or freedom fighters. There were many families that came to Birmingham and they all became very good citizens in the United States.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

I remember reading about how they tried to keep the Russians out from Hungary and they were told "the Americans stand behind you." The Russians came into Hungary with the tanks and the Americans did not stand behind them. Radio Free Europe told the Hungarians, "Don't worry, we're

with you, we'll stand," but they didn't stand behind them. I remember those Hungarians coming out who [were] smuggled across the border, coming over here and picking them up at the station. . . . We took them to various homes and the St. Vincent de Paul Society would maybe feed and shelter them and look after them until we got them established. Those days were quite active. Almost every day I would have to be at the railroad station to pick up a Hungarian family. I remember most of them, of servicing them here and reading about the Hungarian Revolution.

### **Mary Lenkay**

People helped their own relatives. . . . My husband's relatives . . . needed certain foods they couldn't get, like cocoa and coffee and stuff like that and clothes. It was hard to get so we shipped some of them and everybody that had relatives they did the same.

### **Mary Garand**

All I know is that Eisenhower didn't do a darn thing. He let the Communists come in and shoot everybody down that they see. . . . A lot of people came to this country at that time. They all flocked here like crazy because of what happened.

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

Peter Ujvagi, who ran for mayor, came over at that time and it was just an uprising, you know . . . they tried to get their freedom. They didn't succeed because they're Russian dominated. And I remember them, refugees and displaced persons, coming here.

### **Velma Jambor Lengel**

I know that there were an awful lot of people coming here from Hungary and all over. Of course this neighborhood would get all the Hungarians—which we have a lot of, now that I think about it—but they all seem to be doing fine, better than we did. It

seemed they got help more. The bank would help them out without any kind of credit behind them and they got help from everybody, and most of them now have their own homes and they have two homes and businesses. Most of the people that came here were well educated and they wasn't the peasants that came here, it was more around the center like in Hungary and around Budapest.

I think when you come from another country you just, I don't know, you just seem to be more energetic or something to get ahead and work. Of course they work hard, too, so they get ahead, most of them. They say, you know, that you only got one house and they say well you should have been here during the depression; we built the city up and then they came here when everything is fine. Sure it's easy to come to a nice city when everything is fine at the time but you should have been here in the depression.

### **Mike Dandar**

I do know that it must have been terrible living under the Russian rule. I think that maybe from radio news and television that they were getting from other countries that they may have been misled on just how far they could go with the Russians. Maybe they were told that if they started something they would get the backing from the free countries. President Eisenhower was president at the time. He was a former general from the United States Army and he said that there was absolutely no way that we could supply those people with heavy guns or food because they would have to fly over other countries. And in those days they didn't have the high-flying airplanes and rocket ships that we have today, and to violate someone's airspace was really a great error.

I do know that quite a few people left Hungary at that time and quite a few of them settled in Toledo. In fact, my mother had two boys, they were brothers. They came from the northeast part of Hungary, oh, not too far from Satoraljaújhely. Now people that

hear that will know what I'm talking about, it's a town in Hungary and it means "new place under the tent." My folks came from about twenty miles from there but where they came from now is part of Czechoslovakia and [the way] these boys spoke the language is just the way my mother and father spoke Hungarian. And when they (I guess it was through the Catholic Relief Services) got to Toledo, Father Hernady, who was very involved with that through St. Stephen's Church, . . . seeing that they came so close from where my mother and father came from, why he brought them over to my mother and father's house and asked if they could live with them, and my parents agreed at the time.

The older brother, Michael, was in the army and he said that he had only eaten meat once in the past year before he left Hungary before the revolution. I remember him saying that. We had a cat and that cat would follow us across the street whenever Mrs. Rose Dandar, I or one of the kids would go over. And one night we were visiting there and the cat came along with us and Michael, the older Hungarian boy, said that would sure make a good meal back where he came from, pointing to the cat. They said that when you skin them you can't tell a cat from a rabbit. I have never eaten cat and I have eaten rabbit and it tastes good. . . . They said you couldn't do anything without the Russians knowing it and everything was hard to come by, meat and food. Russia took about everything out of there that they could. They would dismantle factories and ship them back to Russia because Russia didn't have the factories. They didn't even have the means of making anything. They didn't have the steel mills at the time. Russia did that in every country that it went into. They not only did that in Hungary but they did it in Czechoslovakia; they did it in Poland.

### **John Bistayi**

Even up to the last minute—not only Hungary but Czechoslovakia—they thought that . . . the Russians were fooling around with them and then

the Russians went over and invaded them. They thought that America was going to help them. And that never took place, and of course the understanding is that Eisenhower at that time thought that it wasn't worth risking another world war and I imagine that's the nuts and bolts of the thing—that they didn't want to take the gamble on another world war. Now whether there would have been or not is going to be debated by historians for a very long time, so beyond that point Hungary always wanted their freedom. They fought for freedom in 1848, for example. They massacred thousands of soldiers and they lost the war. They're too small to fight the big countries, just like now. . . . Quite a few hundred were able to escape and come to America, Canada, or many other countries.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

Of the Hungarian immigrants that came [during the Hungarian Revolution] I just remember a lot of fascinating new people in the neighborhood, a lot of good-looking men, I remember that. Everybody was nice that I met—super people. The one thing that stood out in my mind the most was the fact that they made progress so quickly. They were highly qualified, you know, at certain jobs and the fact that they could save so much money so quickly. I don't know if they just lived more frugally in what they bought, maybe in their food buying, their ways of entertainment or something, but in no time at all they were buying houses and cars. They were just tremendous savers, they really were good savers, that impressed me.







## SECTION V

### COMMUNITY ACTIVISM

#### **Francis Szollosi**

The proposed widening of Consaul Street was the catalyst that bonded the Birmingham people together just as close as when our parents migrated here.

For many years there was a clamor by the people to have an overpass built on Consaul and Paine Avenues. The city finally agreed and began the building of the overpass. They failed to inform the residents that the overpass would be twice as wide as Consaul Street. As time passed, the information leaked out that when the overpass was completed, the city would widen Consaul Street to the same width as the overpass. This, of course, was intolerable, because it would have devastated St. Stephen's Church, St. Stephen's School, and all businesses and homes on Consaul Street.

#### **Joseph "Fudgie" Wlodarz**

I found out some of the things that you had to have in politics. You had to have some connections to get jobs and to get things done. In East Toledo—like in streets, parks, schools to be fixed, roads to be fixed—you had to have some connection in politics and to belong to some organization to get the results for the money you paid in taxes. And East Toledo—that I know of for over fifty years—being in a minority group compared to the rest of Toledo, I think that because the people did stick together in politics that we really got our share of the tax money and the things that we wanted done.

#### **Joseph Szegedi**

One occasion I remember, when the coalition—the Birmingham Coalition—was formed, we needed some money to pay for a lawyer for Consaul Street. They were trying to widen the street, yes, and somehow I didn't volunteer but they said, "You are it." So they said I volunteered a fund-raiser. I said,

"There is only one way we can raise money in a hurry: Father Hernady, if you will donate your big church hall for a dance I will donate the orchestra." Hey, fine, and they made about \$2100, which was pretty good, to pay for the lawyer.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

They wanted to come in and widen Consaul Street to four lanes, which would have wiped out the houses on this side of the street, and half of the restaurant. But that wasn't even the point. This restaurant could always be relocated somewhere else, and like I said it always has been a case of repair, fix, do. We probably would have been better off moving to another area. But, when you feel that firmly about this neighborhood as we do, then it should go on. Something in life has to stay the same.

I was able to go back to my grandmother's village in Hungary and that's still thirty-two houses there. There was thirty-two when she left and it was like walking back through a time capsule. But it's there for me to see a hundred years after she left. I could go back and see it. I think some things in life have to stay the same.

That was a real emotional time for me. I worked on that [widening of Consaul Street] for I don't know how many months—just about gave up any other work just to work on that one. Primarily our leading force was Father Hernady, but the one who worked very closely with me was Steve Serchuck. He was sent to the neighborhood as a neighborhood planner and I believe he worked tirelessly on that project far more hours than he was ever paid to do. I don't know anyone else who worked that hard for the neighborhood.

In any case I worked with Steve on this huge map and it was put together [when] it was maybe sixteen to eighteen feet long and eight feet high. We took that into court to fight against the attorneys that represented fourteen trucking companies. In the meantime, while we were preparing for this, we had depositions from all those trucking companies.

Between myself and Steve and Oscar Kinsey, we went out and measured every route that they took. Every trucking company, whatever their statement was, said they needed Consaul Street. We proved them wrong in every single case. We won this in federal court with the help of that map and item by item working to disprove the facts in those depositions.

This neighborhood was supposed to end up being nice cheap industrial property for someone, but it didn't work out. The neighborhood militarized—absolutely militarized—and thank God for that strength. There were hundreds of people called together on a moment's notice. There were some retired people and they got down to the City Council. No matter what they were trying to do anywhere, people were bused down there to stop every move. It was a real fight that I don't think was accomplished anywhere else in the country. I think we can be proud of what happened here.

I think it did more to put people together than anything in our whole history. When we were threatened, it was just unbelievable to see the neighbors together talking and being out there to stop the trucks—just being out there and doing things together—and out of that was born the Birmingham Festival.

### **Mike Dandar**

The city government wanted to make a four-lane highway out of Consaul Street. Originally Consaul Street was a two-lane highway and back around, I can't quite recall if it was just before the war—say in the early '40s or in the late '40s—they widened Consaul Street. Consaul Street used to have trees growing on both sides and they took and wiped out all the trees to widen it to what it is now. So they must have took from four to six feet on each side of the road and made it what it is now—two lanes of parking and two lanes of traffic—and they wanted to take and make it a four-lane highway out of that. The chances are that there would have been

parking on each side, and they got the state interested in it so the state would have paid so much money to build the railroad overpass. In fact they even started to buy some property by the railroad track.

The first houses on the south side of the Consaul Street—on the other side of Wheeling Street—now they bought up maybe four of those houses, maybe five, or maybe all the way down to that tavern that's right there by the Collins Park golf course. Those houses were all bought by the city or the state or whoever was going to build it, but older heads of the neighborhood prevailed and it was mentioned that [if] they would do this to the neighborhood, [it] would cut off that side of the neighborhood from this side. If they would have taken it, it would have been a big price to pay to take off the front of St. Stephen's School and Church, either that or move them back. Now they are talking about a lot of money and if they don't want to do that they would have to wipe out all the houses and the business on the other side of Consaul Street. You would take out the front of all those houses.

Peter Ujvagi, who is from the neighborhood, worked for some kind of urban development, or urban outfit in Washington, D.C. Father Hernady got involved, [and] Monsignor Baroni from Washington, D.C., got very involved and showed what happens to neighborhoods when they cut through them and they build roads and they cut off one portion of the neighborhood. When those highways go through neighborhoods those neighborhoods invariably go down within ten years. It becomes a slum, if it isn't abandoned. That was proven in I don't know how many different cities.

It showed that if people get together and band together and make a noise loud and long enough, someone is going to listen to them and this is what happened in the neighborhood. It really brought the neighborhood together because just about everyone was concerned.

### **John Bistayi**

Well now, that was one of the most keenly felt problems that the neighborhood had to face due to the fact that if they were to widen Consaul Street the understanding was that it . . . would have widened as much as sixty-four feet, so it would be four lanes and probably without a doubt it would be wider. It meant that they'd have to put chain link or something to keep it safe for the people who would want to cross Consaul Street—for the kids to go to school and members of the church to go to church. They'd probably have to build an overpass—you know, one of them walks—that would have been an enormous disadvantage to St. Stephen's and the school system. Of course it would wipe out the Kinsey Mortuary and it would possibly force Tony Packo's to vacate because when you are going to make a four lane out of Consaul Street, you can imagine how much extra ground you need. And that was one of the most serious things that happened in the neighborhood. There's still the same problem in say the next ten, fifteen years. The problem has not disappeared.

### **Wilma Thomas**

The people of the neighborhood were well united against the widening of the street. This problem brought the whole neighborhood together, unified it, and that was the beginning of the Birmingham Neighborhood Coalition. And so, through the efforts of the coalition—including all the churches, the schools, the businesses, the VFW, the K of C—the overpass project was abandoned. It would have destroyed the neighborhood, and the people would not allow that to happen. The Birmingham Coalition has been an instrument of the people and has brought about much good.

### **Elizabeth Borics**

Well, I was in the Birmingham Coalition for a long time. I worked for the first three or four festivals that they had, which was quite a big affair. I was

selling noodles because we had made noodles to sell. I was in the old Senior Citizens Program. We made noodles to raise money so as to keep our program going.

They had dinners, they had dances . . . on the street, and in the evenings there was dancing at all four places—at the Veterans Hall, Calvin United Church, at St. Stephen's and also I think at the Knights of Columbus Hall—and a good time was had by all. The second year we sold a lot of cookies, we made cookies and cakes and went there from twelve o'clock to six o'clock until we got sold out selling cookies and cakes, and that was all going towards the coalition.

### **John Bistayi**

When they decided to close down the library, well, we put on an intensive, what would you say, enlightening of the people that they should use the library instead of going downtown, and take advantage of the library because of the fact that it's only blocks away from any part of Birmingham. You know, Birmingham is only six by eight blocks.

### **Wilma Thomas**

Many people in the neighborhood didn't use the library. There were many of them who couldn't read English, and it just wasn't being used to its capacity. The people who used it were high school students and children from the elementary schools. Some of the residents also used it regularly, but surveys showed that our library was not used to its capacity. It was the only cultural thing we had in Birmingham, and we thought that it should be kept here. So the people again united and everyone took out ten or twelve books at a time so that the records would show that the library was being used. I think it was a good thing because I know there are many more people who use the library now. It has become an integral part of the neighborhood and a center for the revitalization of the Hungarian culture with lectures on Hungarian history, classes, and dis-



plays of Hungarian arts and crafts. The library bought more books written in Hungarian as well as other books written in large print and of special interest to the Hungarian people. Again, the neighborhood united; the people and the community became stronger.

### **Elizabeth Borics**

There was the one time they were going to close the Birmingham branch of the public library and we—the Birmingham Coalition—all got together and we said we will not allow them to close it because our children and our grandchildren need that library (which they still do). . . . We took as many books as we could out so that showed them we were interested in keeping our library. We checked them books out and after that they said that they saw that we were very determined. Now this is through the Birmingham Coalition and I was still an active member at that time, and we did force the issue enough to keep the library open, which I'm very glad we were able to do.

### **Anna Galambos Gall**

There's the Friends of the Library at the Birmingham branch and now there's a Slovak display . . . aprons and dolls and embroidery and books. I contributed a lot of old pictures that I had that were my mother's—weddings and funerals.

### **John Bistayi**

The start of the [Birmingham] Festival was to be a fund raiser and turn it back into the good of the neighborhood, but also it was a means and ways of possibly keeping the spirit of the neighborhood and the citizens so they would not go backwards but forwards in the improvement of the neighborhood.

I've been the chairman of the Birmingham Festival for five years. I would say that it is the best one-day festival in the state of Ohio. In the first couple of years that the festival was put together it was like you cross your fingers and hope that things

would work out real well. But . . . it has kept growing so that by the time we reached the seventh year we had, according to the judgment of people who know how to estimate crowds, we reached, I think, on our peak year sixty thousand people. In spite of the years we had rain—four of the years, and two of them they were not only rain but they were down-pours that you couldn't see through—we couldn't believe the people that stayed till ten, eleven o'clock. We reached the point where weather is no obstacle to the success of our one-day festival, which is always on a Sunday. I think our average crowd is forty thousand people.

We take advantage of Tony Packo being in the neighborhood itself. We don't have any doubt about it that it draws an additional many thousands of dollars and people on a yearly basis—without a doubt, because they are known throughout the United States because of the "M\*A\*S\*H" program.

### **Mike Dandar**

I don't quite know when it (the Birmingham Festival) first started—1975 or 1976—but I know that after it got started many people used to come out from all around, and in fact I heard some of the presidents of the coalition say that they get letters from other people asking when the Birmingham Festival would be held because they wanted to come down and see how it worked. I know that people come from out-of-state. I attend church meetings in Detroit and I have heard people up there talk about what an affair this is. It's doing very well, very well.

### **Ann Wagner**

We have a Birmingham Hall of Fame which was started in 1977 and the purpose of that is to honor the men and the women who helped to make our community of Birmingham **the** ethnic neighborhood.

## REMINISCENCES

### **Agnes Gadus McDaniel**

It is nice to live in an area where you know many of the people and not only the people next door to you. It's like living in a small town. People here are concerned about one another. Even though many of the young people have moved to other neighborhoods, they still come back to Birmingham to meet old friends at church functions and the ethnic festival.

### **Louis Kovacs**

I've always said this and I don't give a damn what anyone says; I think that Birmingham should set an example to real Americanism because they are the ones that have been able to live like Americans, like we want, like they want us to live. I really do believe that we set a wonderful example. People over there, even in the biggest depression they didn't expect to be catered to. They didn't want a whole lot of aid, they just wanted to live. A lot of people would go out and butcher hogs and they have a couple chickens or like that but they didn't expect a lot of relief. They want just enough to exist but they didn't expect to have a car or anything like that.

They were real Americans. I would say that they are the best Americans they got in this country. Birmingham should set an example of that. They were good Christians. I think Birmingham is a good example of democracy, a very good example. They have nice churches and everything; good schools—a real good school that Birmingham—a good library.

### **Margaret Brezvai**

I like Birmingham for the fact that there are a lot of memories here. I lived here all my life. My children grew up here; they went to school here. And there's an awful lot of memories, my parents being here and all. And so I feel that Birmingham means a lot to me because I'm used to being here in Birmingham, all my life.

Well, it has changed some because when I was a young girl there were a lot more Hungarian people in the neighborhood and everybody knew everybody, and now it's all kinds of nationalities and it's different. You really don't know everybody like we did before. You could walk down the street and know every house, know who lived where.

... [Birmingham] has a lot of memories, and the things that have gone on are just nice. The churches are the same and the people in it are all the same. The church and the Hungarian traditions are mostly the same. Well, the nicest part of Birmingham is the fact that people stick together.

### **Ann Cherko Junga**

I'm very satisfied here. My husband, I told him, "How 'bout moving to Oregon." He says, "No, because I want to talk to people when I go down the street; I want to talk to people." So, that's why I'm still living here in Birmingham. I can go to my church, I have transportation. I still got my lovely bakery. I got Louie Takacs here or the grocery store, if I want to. We have a variety store. I can get the bus to go over here, I don't even need to park. That's what I like about Birmingham. And I love my church.

### **Ann Wagner**

When you need help the people are there to help you. We always have somewheres to go if we need help or if we're in trouble. We know there is always someone that we can turn to.

### **Ann Lucas**

I find that to be able to walk down the street and meet people that I have known since my earliest childhood—people who never seem to grow old, who always seem to look the same—has a beautiful continuity to it. Even the event of a death, the attending of a funeral; it's like a part of you is gone but the memory is always there; that somehow this person has touched your life and you go on carrying

this, this person, with you.

Living in a small contained neighborhood like Birmingham is very supportive. You know what you can do; you know just how much you can get away with because your neighbors do know you. In times of stress there is support. In these days where women have this very tragic habit of outliving their husbands, there is support for people like this. You find strength in women your age who are going through the same crisis that you are, and as you get older there are your contemporaries that you can identify with, who are going through the same problems, who are experiencing the same joys you are.

In this, there is a lifeblood type of thing where you are, not just one person against the world. You have a neighborhood at your back and you go on. You pick up your burdens and you know that your neighbors will rejoice with you, your neighbors will grieve with you. It's a very special, unique type of experience and I feel sorry for people who don't have this background to draw on, people who in effect are rootless.

At one time in our marriage we moved out of the neighborhood into the Old West End. We only lasted there about two years. My husband and I were sitting around one day and he said to me, "Why don't we move home?" and that's what we did. We sold our house there and we moved back to Birmingham and we're living in the house now that we moved into at the time—and we haven't been sorry one day.

### **Mary Bence**

I'll tell you, the people are really much friendlier and you know your neighbors around here. Somewhere else you don't know who lives next door and who lives down the street. Over here I know everybody that lives here all the time and I don't go down to the other end, but I know the people who live next door to me have lived there since about 1930.

### **Alberta Traylor**

It's a peaceful neighborhood. It has always been peaceful . . . in this section where I live there's not a lot of fighting and the majority of the people work and they own their homes. We get along and I have very good neighbors. Some of my neighbors go to St. Stephen's, some go to Holy Rosary and I go to a Baptist church.

### **Nancy Packo Horvath**

I think that we could protect our ethnic background and still be a cohesive neighborhood. There aren't too many neighborhoods left of any ethnic heritage. Most of them got divided and wiped out. I think it's nice that children of the families that settled here are still here in many cases.

I think there is a future. We've never changed very much. We have always been racially mixed. It's just not Hungarians, it's Polish, Italian, Czechoslovakian, Bulgarians, blacks, since I was a little kid. It's gotta be rare in a neighborhood that they all got along.

### **J. Oscar Kinsey**

It makes me happy to see that the traditions of the old people of years gone by are still alive today.

### **Elmer Lucas**

Frankly, I would like to see more younger people move back or into the neighborhood to maintain continuity. I realize that it will not be what it was when I was a youngster growing up, when we were a self-contained community where we had a small bank, grocery store, tailor, drug store and shoe repair shop. Everything that you would possibly need, including a dentist and a doctor, were located in walking distance of anyone that lived in the area. I know that with the automobile that is not possible any more, but it still is a good place to live to raise your family. Hopefully, our leaders will make some sort of aid available to younger people to take some of the older homes that are being let go or

run down and give them help in locating in the neighborhood.

**Joel Vargo**

As long as the churches are there, Birmingham will stay. Although now they are talking about widening Front Street again . . . it still won't hurt Birmingham. Birmingham will exist; we'll never see the end of it.

**Agnes Gadus McDaniel**

Our entire family is very proud of our Slovak heritage and we still try to maintain some of the cultural, social and religious customs with which we grew up.

**J. Oscar Kinsey**

The thing I'm most proud of is being a Hungarian. I'm proud of the Hungarian heritage. I'm proud of the fact that I'm Hungarian. I'm proud of the fact that I speak Hungarian. I'm very proud of it and I'll never deny my nationality to anybody.

I'm proud of my Hungarian heritage.

**William Kertesz**

I like Birmingham. I still like the neighborhood. It's pretty cohesive yet. . . . Times have changed a little, but it's still a good-feelin' neighborhood.





## Biographical Sketches of Interviewees

**Mary Bence's** family has been in Birmingham since 1912. A sergeant in the Women's Army Corps during World War II, Ms. Bence was secretary of the Toledo-Lucas County Memorial Day Association for twenty-eight years. She is also a member of the Onized Club at Libbey Glass, where she worked as a silkscreen operator.

**John Bistayi** has been active in the community for many years. He was chairman of the Birmingham Festival for five years and helped with the effort to keep the Birmingham public library open. He has always encouraged residents to make use of Birmingham facilities, such as the library and Collins Park.

Originally a resident of Ironville, **Elizabeth Borics** has been an officer and member of the Holy Rosary Altar Society for nearly forty years. She also worked at Libbey-Owens-Ford for twelve years and has devoted much of her time to the community and young people. She has lived on Caledonia Street for thirty-seven years.

**Margaret Brezvai's** mother moved to Birmingham in 1900; her father arrived in 1902. She went to St. Stephen's Elementary School and graduated from Waite High School. Ms. Brezvai has been a clerk at the Toledo-Lucas County Public Library's Birmingham and Locke branches, and enjoys embroidery, cooking and traveling.

**Mike Dandar's** parents left Zemplin County, Czechoslovakia—then a part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire—in 1913. A graduate of Birmingham Elementary and Macomber High Schools, Mr. Dandar served four years in the coast guard, and then worked as a stationary engineer at Allied Chemical for thirty-five years. He also spent twenty-nine years as a credit union officer and twenty-five years

as a union official. Mr. Dandar volunteers at St. Charles Hospital two days a week.

Moravians from Czechoslovakia, **Frank Drlik's** parents, Magdalene Janas and Frank Drlik, came to America in 1910 or 1911. Mr. Drlik's father was instrumental in establishing the Sokol organization in Birmingham, based on similar groups in Europe. Always involved in gymnastics, during the depression years Mr. Drlik was the boys' instructor for WPA-sponsored gym classes.

**Anna Galambos Gall's** mother was born in Birmingham in 1892, and her father came here from Borsod Megye, Hungary in 1912. She attended St. Stephen's Elementary School, where her teacher was the same nun who had taught her mother. A 1933 graduate of Waite High School, Ms. Gall is a member of the Birmingham Book Club and reads extensively.

**Mary Garand's** mother was only thirteen when, following the death of her parents, she and her brother and sister came to the United States to live with an aunt. Ms. Garand included the times she went to see Hungarian live shows with her mother and entertainment at the Catholic Community Club among her favorite childhood memories. Her husband was a contractor and builder; they had four children.

The Hungarian-born parents of **John Hornyak** came to Birmingham in 1893. Mr. Hornyak attained the rank of corporal in the army, then worked for the Western and Lake Erie Railroad for forty-one years, first on a section gang and then as a switchman. He enjoyed boxing, basketball, softball and growing roses.

**Lucy Romano Hornyak's** parents, both born in the Italian town of Roseta Valfatore, arrived in Birmingham in July 1920. Ms. Hornyak married

her husband, John, in 1941 and over the years they celebrated both their Italian and Hungarian heritages. Ms. Hornyak's hobbies include reading books and crafts.

**Nancy Packo Horvath's** grandparents came from Hungary. Her parents, Rose and Tony, opened Tony Packo's Cafe in 1932. Ms. Horvath graduated from St. Stephen's, Central Catholic High School and the University of Toledo's College of Business Administration. She still participates in many civic activities and is presently involved in producing Packo's products for retail sale all over the country.

**Ann Cherko's** parents went from Hungary to Filbert, West Virginia, where her father took a job as a coal miner. They moved to Birmingham in 1940. Ms. Junga held a factory job for thirty-four years before retiring in 1966. She is active with St. Stephen's Church and is known for making good noodles.

The Hungarian-born parents of **William Kertesz** moved to Birmingham in 1915. Mr. Kertesz graduated from St. Stephen's and Waite High Schools, joined the navy during World War II and worked on the Nickle Plate Railroad until 1951. From 1951 to 1981 he was a firefighter with the Toledo Fire Department. He is a member of the East Toledo Historical Society, the Hungarian Club of Toledo, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the American Legion and St. Stephen's Church.

Of Hungarian heritage, **J. Oscar Kinsey** lived in Birmingham since 1918, when his family moved from Lorraine, Ohio. He owned the funeral home which his father, Stephen Kinsey, built at Consaul and Genessee Streets in 1928. Mr. Kinsey was active in local affairs such as the Birmingham Coalition, the Birmingham Business Association and the East Toledo Club.

**Louis Kovacs'** parents were born in Hungary. An infantryman during World War II, Mr. Kovacs served twenty months in combat in Italy. After the war he worked at Libbey-Owens-Ford for thirty-one years. He enjoys traveling and photography.

**Velma Jambor Lengel's** parents, Mary and Andrew Jambor, came to Birmingham from Hungary via Connorsville, Pennsylvania, and Cleveland, Ohio. She lived in the same house from the age of two. When she and Frances Lengel, a celebrated football player, eloped, the story made the headlines. She lived on Consaul Street most of her life and her husband worked at Union Oil for forty-two years.

When **Mary Lenkay's** parents, Steve and Barbara Kovesdi, came from Gomor, Hungary, to Birmingham in 1904, she was two years old. Ms. Lenkay lived in the same house in Birmingham for forty years. She has been involved in fundraising activities at St. Stephen's over the years and continues to be involved with the church.

Birmingham was home to **Ann Lucas** for all but two years early in her marriage. During that brief time she and her husband, Elmer, found they missed Birmingham so much that they moved back again. Ms. Lucas knew people from her early childhood and drew comfort and strength from living in a close-knit neighborhood.

**Elmer Lucas'** grandparents came to the States from Hungary. His father was born in Delaware and his mother in Toledo. He grew up speaking English, but learned some Hungarian from his grandparents. The house where he and his wife, Ann, lived for more than thirty-five years is just a block from where he was born on Burger Street. Most of his memories from early years related to sports, particularly softball and baseball.

**Mary R. Mahler's** parents grew up in Velica Divinea, Czechoslovakia. She attended Holy Rosary Elementary School, and worked at Electric AutoLite for thirty-four years. She is an active volunteer, working with senior citizens and visiting nursing homes and hospitals.

**Agnes Gadus McDaniel's** Czechoslovakia-born mother and father moved to Birmingham in 1905 and 1906, respectively. Ms. McDaniel has been involved with many community activities, including Rosary Church, the Toledo Diocese and the Birmingham Coalition, and has been inducted into the Birmingham Hall of Fame.

The maternal grandparents of **Eleanor Weizer Mesteller**, Mr. and Mrs. Louis Bodak, came to Birmingham about 1908 and opened a furniture store on Paine Avenue in 1929. Ms. Mesteller's father and mother managed the store and then she and her husband became its owners in 1945. In 1985 their son and daughter-in-law became the fourth consecutive generation to be involved with the store.

**Helen Georgoff Munson** has lived in the same house for sixty-five years. People in the neighborhood believe that the house is about 150 years old; Ms. Munson remembers when they added a second story to it to accommodate their family of nine children. She is proud of the fact that her father, Theodore "Tony" Georgoff, born in Bulgaria, and her mother, Mary, born in Hungary, became U.S. citizens in Toledo.

**Frank Nagy** has the discharge paper showing that his grandfather was a cavalry officer in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Mr. Nagy's father was born in this country. His maternal grandparents went back to Hungary after his mother, Julia Vajda, was born. Upon completion of her schooling in Hungary, his mother came back to the U.S. at the

age of eighteen. His parents continue to live in the house that his father moved to shortly after birth.

Before she came to America, **Victoria Oravecz's** mother had lived in a convent in Budapest from the age of nine to twenty-one. Her maternal grandfather was Slovak and her maternal grandmother was Hungarian. Victoria was always interested in acting. Ms. Oravecz played many different roles in church theatrical productions and she used to attend stock company performances in downtown Toledo. She turned down an invitation to join a New York stage group and shortly after that she married.

**William Pasztor's** parents came from Borsod Megye, Debrete, to Birmingham in 1911. Mr. Pasztor attended Birmingham Elementary School and Waite High School, and served in Italy during World War II. He is an active member of St. Stephen's church, and enjoys woodworking, coin collecting and poker.

There were six members of **Andrew Pocse's** family. He recalled some fun times swimming in the Maumee River and playing football from 1922 to 1932, but times were generally hard. He starting working in the sugar beet fields when he was nine or ten years old to help support the family. Because he missed a lot of school during his childhood years, he valued educational opportunities.

Both of **Anna Pocse's** parents were born in Hungary. Her father, John Marusz, owned a bar on Front Street. Ms. Pocse attended St. Stephen's Elementary School, and worked as a cashier from 1945 to 1972. She has lived in Birmingham all her life and maintains an interest in sports.

**William Szabo's** mother from Saros Patah, Gomor Megye, Hungary and his father from Heves Megye, Hungary. His father became a retail grocer and farmer, and his mother was a "constant valu-

able consultant and advisor to five sons on the value of honesty, diligence, work and perseverance. Top of her list was the great value of education."

In 1906 and 1907 **Joseph Szegedi's** parents moved to Birmingham from Hungary. Mr. Szegedi became an electrician in 1936 and served with the 814th Engineer Battalion in World War II, earning five campaign stars. He plays violin with his own orchestra, "The Gypsy Melodaires." He also spent eighteen years as chairman and president of St. Michael's Catholic Church of the Byzantine Rite.

**Francis Szollosi's** father was born in Mezokovacs Haza and his mother in Encs, both in Hungary. They moved to Birmingham in 1909. Mr. Szollosi attended the University of Oklahoma and served in the naval reserve in World War II. He began working at the post office in 1947, and served as labor consultant while postmaster at Toledo. In 1976 he was elected a Lucas County commissioner, a position he held until 1984.

At the age of thirteen, with only the clothes on her back, **Priscilla Taylor's** mother, Elizabeth Gereb, came to this country. Shortly after her father came to the U.S., World War II started and he joined the air force, continuing to play in the band for another thirty-five years. In the interim he transposed music for the Toledo Symphony for twenty-five years. Ms. Taylor remembers being in the church choir, Christian Endeavor, Girl Scouts and later the Missionary Guild.

**Wilma Thomas** is a member of St. Stephen's Church. During World War II, she worked in military intelligence at Fort Hayes. She was a teacher at St. Stephen's Elementary School from 1964 to 1982. She enjoys music, swimming and reading, as well as church and community work.

**Alberta Traylor's** parents moved to Birmingham from Jackson, Mississippi. She attended Birmingham Elementary School, Waite High School, the University of Toledo and Davis Business College. She was a unit clerk for the nursing service at St. Vincent's Medical Center for twenty-five years. She is a member of Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church, where she sings in the choir.

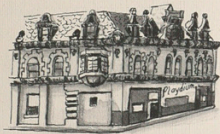
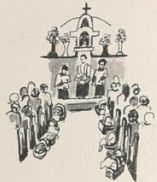
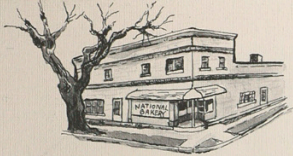
**Joel Vargo's** father came from Hungary at the age of three. His maternal grandfather, Michael Orosz, was one of the founders of St. Michael's. Mr. Vargo's paternal grandfather founded Vargo Coal, and his father continued in the business until a year after his birth. Baptized Joseph, his parents changed his name to Joel because there were so many other Joe Vargos in Birmingham. He helped organize the Birmingham Ethnic Festival and was also the first Protestant commander of Birmingham VFW Post 4906.

Born on Michigan Avenue, **Ann Wagner** attended St. Stephen's Elementary School and Central Catholic High School. She worked at Tiedtke's in the 1950s, J.C. Penney's for seventeen years, and still works at the American Nursing Home in Oregon. Ms. Wagner is a member of VFW Post 4906 Ladies' Auxiliary and has bowled intermittently since 1957.

**Joseph "Fudgie" Wlodarz** and his parents came to Birmingham in 1914. He graduated from Central Catholic High School and worked as an inspector and polisher at Unicast. In recognition of his coaching three generations of children, an East Side baseball field was named after him. He has been inducted into numerous halls of fame, including Birmingham, Central Catholic, Toledo, the UAW and Ohio.







Illustrated by  
jan vezner

